



OLD SLEUTH WEEKLY

NO. 42

Price 5 cents

ACCUSED FROM THE COFFIN



The
ARTHUR WESTBROOK
Company
CLEVELAND,
U. S. A.

by
"OLD
SLEUTH"



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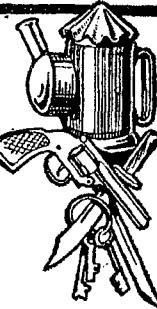
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OLD SLEUTH WEEKLY



A Series of

THE MOST THRILLING DETECTIVE STORIES EVER PUBLISHED

No. 42.

THE ARTHUR WESTBROOK COMPANY, CLEVELAND, U. S. A.

Vol. I.

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Accused from the Coffin OR THE FRUSTRATION OF A DASTARDLY PLOT

By

"OLD SLEUTH."

CHAPTER I.

"Tom, did you notice that old fellow who has been mousing around the body of the dead girl?"

"Yes, I noticed him."

"Did you notice his manner?"

"Yes, I did."

"How particular he was to pick up all he could about the finding of the body?"

"Yes, I did; and I noticed how he tried to 'play off' innocent-like."

"We will follow him up. That old chap knows something about this murder."

The conversation recorded above passed between two city detectives under circumstances that were tragic and startling.

On the night previous to the one on which the talk occurred, a veiled lady had secured a room in a well-known New York hotel. Nothing was seen or heard of the guest until late on the following morning, when the maid reported to the clerk at the office that she thought there was something wrong with the guest in Room 13. The watchman and porter were sent to the room, and failing to gain admittance, they forced an entrance, when a sight met their gaze that caused them to recoil in horror and alarm. On the bed lay the body of a beautiful young woman. One glance told the tale. She was dead. Her mouth was open; her eyes, beautiful in life, were fixed in the steady glare of death.

A sergeant from the station visited the room, and immediately afterward two detectives were put upon the case.

The latter commenced a thorough investigation, and their discoveries and conclusions they kept to themselves. They were still in the midst of their inquiries when the coroner arrived; and later on, in some mysterious manner, a queer-looking old man gained an entrance into the room, and he silently made a little examination on his own account.

They spoke to the coroner. The latter merely said:

"I won't order the old man away. No, certainly not. He may discover something, or may turn up as a witness."

The coroner was in command, and as he would not order the old man from the room, the two detectives had nothing to say; but they kept their eyes upon the old fellow, and agreed to follow him up, just as a matter of precaution.

It was the general impression, from a very superficial study of the surroundings of the beautiful corpse, that it was a case of suicide. No wound was found upon the body; and another conclusion was that death had followed the swallowing of some deadly drug; and this suspicion was confirmed by the fact that there were no identification marks upon the body, nor were there any letters that would serve to indicate the identity of the dead girl.

The coroner had the body removed in due time to the morgue, and after having impaneled a jury, an adjournment was taken to await the revelations of an autopsy.

In the meantime, some very curious incidents had occurred. The two detectives who had been commenting upon the actions of the old man who had been so officious in the room where the body had been found, determined to fall to the trail of the stranger, and their motives in so doing will be disclosed later on.

The stranger had made a great many inquiries, and appeared to be very deeply interested, and when one of the detectives addressed a question to him he made an evasive answer and turned away. He did not remain during the impaneling of the jury, but seemingly, after having picked up all the information he could, he turned away and left the room, and at once the two detectives started to follow him, and one of them said to the other:

"Tom, that was a murder."

"That's my idea."

"That old fellow knows something."

"We'll find out what interest he has in the matter, anyhow."

"I've an idea, chummie, that the old fellow is under cover."

"That's just what ran through my mind."

The old man meantime had gained the street, and the two detectives followed down and were on his track. They were known as two very cute men. They were young fellows, but had won considerable distinction in the way of detective work.

Tom and Mattie followed their man for some distance, when suddenly a little urchin ran up to them and exclaimed, as he seized hold of Tom Baily:

"Halloo, mister! you're just the man I want to see!"

"Well, what do you want, lad?"

"Pardon me, gentlemen; I've made a mistake. You ain't the covies I thought you were. I'm looking for a cop, I am;" and without another word the lad shot away and was lost in the throng passing along the street.

The two detectives started to resume their pursuit, but their man had most mysteriously disappeared.

The officers ran forward, and then by mutual consent, after the exchange of a signal, separated. Ten minutes later they came together again, and Mattie said:

"Well, old man, that was a dump."

"What?"

"Don't you get on to it?"

"Sing out your tenor."

"The lad was in it. We were fooled. It was all a trick; but we will pick up the thread again, you bet."

"If that was so all our suspicions were well warranted."

"You're right."

"Did you take any notes?"

"I'd recognize him if he were drawn from the river after having been dead seven weeks. But I'm hungry. Let's go in and swallow a lunch."

Upon entering the lunch-room they sat down at a table, and Tom Baily said, as he removed his hat and wiped his brow:

"That was a bad beat, Mattie."

"Yes, it was."

"Between you and me, this affair is going to be what they call a celebrated case."

"You're right it is."

"There has been a game."

"Certain."

"That girl did not commit suicide. It is a murder case, as sure as you are sitting opposite me at this moment."

"That's my idea, and it came to me the moment I set eyes on that corpse."

"You have the handkerchief?"

"I have."

Mattie drew a lady's handkerchief from his pocket and passed it to his partner. The latter examined it carefully, and then said:

"See here."

Mattie directed his glance as requested, and his eyes rested upon a name almost obliterated; but when put under a glass there was plainly revealed the letters which indicated the name, Essie Hinsdale.

"That handkerchief was intended to be found, Mattie."

"Well, yes, it looks so."

"Not another identification mark was found on the body?"

"No."

While the conversation was in progress a very ordinary-looking man—one who might be set down for a clerk—entered the lunch-room and took a seat near the two detectives. The newcomer gave an order, took up a paper, and appeared to be deeply interested in its contents. The two detectives paid no attention to the man who had entered. The latter, however, cast an occasional glance over toward the two officers. It was a keen, searching glance. There was intelligence in the gleam of his eyes when he saw the handkerchief produced, and there followed an expression of deep interest on his face. He was not reading; the paper was a pretense; the man was watching and listening.

"I tell you, Mattie," said Tom Baily, "I am deeply interested in the old codger."

"Did you notice how he studied the face?"

"I did; and that is not all; he was looking for some identification mark; and, between you and me, he knows something about that affair."

"I am pretty well satisfied he does."

"Did he know us?"

"That I can't say; but one thing is certain, he was there prepared."

"That's so."

"He found out pretty quick that we were on his track."

"That is dead certain."

"He put up a job to throw us off."

"He did; and that confirms my suspicion that he was under cover."

"Ten to one the coroner will make it out a case of suicide."

"Sure."

"And that cuts us off."

"Not much. We have our suspicions aroused. We can be on the lay, and something will turn up. I tell you there will be a big noise over this affair unless some one comes forward and positively identifies the body—some one who can prove his own good character."

"And then?"

"The case drops out. But, between you and me, no reputable person will identify the body."

"Then you think it will not be identified?"

"I think it will be, and there is where we will come in for our clew. I tell you there is something under this death. It is not a case of suicide; and if it is a murder, there was some deep purpose that led to the murder of so handsome a girl. She could not have been over eighteen, and was in good health a few hours before her death."

"I wonder if any one got into the room before we arrived; I mean any one who would be likely to investigate?"

"The clerk told me that some one in some mysterious manner must have got into the room."

"Didn't he see who it was?"

"No."

"But something is missing."

"What?"

"When we found the body there was one ring on the second finger."

"Yes."

"The clerk says he can swear that there were two when the body was first discovered."

"Will he testify to that?"

"No; I told him to say nothing about it."

The two detectives completed their lunch and left the place. The man who had been pretending to read the paper left also. There was a smile upon his face, and a look of keen intelligence. He followed on the track of the two detectives, and, strangely enough, the two bright men did not tumble to the fact. Possibly they were not on their guard—not expecting a shadow.

The dodger followed for some distance, when he was joined by a lad. The latter stole up silently, and the man said:

"Eddie, you see those two men?"

"I do."

"The taller one?"

"Yes."

"He has a lady's handkerchief in his pocket."

"Well?"

"I want that handkerchief."

"You shall have it," answered the lad, and he darted away.

CHAPTER II.

The two detectives had said there was a deep mystery underlying the death of the supposed suicide. They had thrown out several other very significant suggestions, and we will here say that as our narrative progresses our readers will learn that the detectives were correct in their suspicions.

There was indeed a deep, a very deep and romantic mystery underlying the discovery of the dead body, and there was also a deep mystery in connection with the old man who had been seen mousing around.

After the brief colloquy we have recorded, the man fell off from his pursuit, and the boy fell to the shadow.

The two detectives proceeded to head-quarters, and the lad hung around outside. Finally one of the officers came forth. He was the shorter one. The lad let him pass. Later the taller detective stepped forth to the street, and the lad fell to his trail.

He was an insignificant-looking little cuss. No one would notice him; but there was a world of intelligence in that little head, after all. He was close to the men. He possessed eyes like a ferret and ears like a rabbit. He had closed in upon the two men so he could overhear the first words that passed between them, and he saw the detective, Tom Baily, produce a note, show it to the man he had met, and heard him ask:

"Are you the writer of that note?"

"I am."

"It is addressed in my name?"

"It is."

"Why did you select me?"

"I saw you at the hotel when the body of the girl was found, and I learned you were a detective. I supposed you would have charge of the case. I had some information to impart. I sent for you."

"What is your name?"

"If I tell you my name my information will stop there."

"Why will your information stop there?"

"Because there are reasons why I must not be known in this affair."

"Anything you may tell me will be in confidence."

"I know that."

"Then you must tell me your name."

"I would give you my name only there are reasons why I must not be known in this case. You will never see me again. I only intend to give you a few pointers. If I give you my name my lips are sealed."

The detective meditated a moment, and then said:

"All right; I will waive my question. You need not give me your name. Give me the information."

"You saw the lady?"

"I did."

"What is your opinion?"

"I did not come here in answer to your note to impart information. I came here to receive it."

"You can aid me in imparting information by answering my questions."

"To a certain extent, yes."

"Well, what is your idea? Is it a case of suicide or murder?"

"It was a murder."

"Do you know it was a murder?"

"No; but I so suspect."

"This is not information. I gain nothing by what you suspect."

Tom Baily hesitated a moment, and then said:

"Young man, if you are fooling me, so much the worse for you. I've seen you. I've heard you talk, I've got your photograph; you can never escape me if I need you."

"Why do you tell me this?"

"Because I've something more to tell. I think it is a murder case."

"Have you taken up any line of investigation?"

"That is a question I can not answer."

"Did the girl arrive at the hotel alone?"

"It is supposed so."

"She did not."

"Aha! you know she did not?"

"Investigate that suggestion; go to the hotel; find out who went there with her, or who arrived just after her; who took a room near her."

"Well?"

"Then you will make some very startling discoveries."

"What will I discover?"

"You will discover that within half an hour after the arrival of the young lady at the hotel a young man registered."

"Well?"

"You will learn that the young man was as signed to a room on the same floor with the young lady."

"Well?"

"Go in and examine that room."

"Well?"

"You may find something there."

"And then?"

"I will meet you again."

"When and where?"

"I will manage to communicate with you. I can not agree upon time and place now."

Tom Baily was thoughtful a few moments, and then said:

"Very well. I will follow up the clews you have given me, and I will expect to meet you again."

"You will hear from me."

It was evident that the detective did not note the man's answer, "You will hear from me," instead of "You will meet me."

"I will depend upon you."

"You can; and you will make the investigations at once!"

"I will."

"One word more; do not give out yet that you suspect it was a murder."

"Why not?"

"The bird may fly."

"You appear to be pretty well posted."

"I am. Keep your information and your suspicions to yourself until you make an arrest."

"Ah! I see."

"Good-day," said the man; and he walked off with a rapid step.

The detective disappeared for an instant. Another man appeared a moment later. We write, "another man;" we will amend—a party came forth who looked like another man, but his secret was betrayed by the lad who had been watching. The latter muttered:

"Aha! a transform! But I am on to you, Mister Man!"

Indeed, it was the detective, who had reappeared under a transform. He hurried away. The lad was at his heels. The detective looked around in every direction, and he muttered:

"Hang it! I'm too late. Fooled again, but not badly. I'm on to him! I will meet him again. I'll return to head-quarters, and then make a little investigation down at the hotel. I'll follow the instructions of the man, anyhow."

The lad overheard what was said. A look of keen intelligence swept over his cunning little face, and he indulged a muttered remark. He merely said:

"It's all right. I will be in time. I'll follow the other chap."

The lad Eddie started off. He struck a straight course. He did not have to go very far. He saw his game enter a handsome residence on Fifth Avenue. The lad noted the house, took some keen bearings, and then jumped on a car and rode down-town. He soon appeared at the hotel where the suicide or murder, whichever it was, had taken place. He

stroked into the office, and, singularly enough, the lad had undergone a slight transform.

"I reckon I am a little ahead of time," he muttered.

The lad had heard the detective say he would go to head-quarters. He knew about how long it would take to go to head-quarters, and he made his calculations to a second; and he was pretty accurate, for even while he waited the detective appeared.

The officer was evidently well known to the clerk of the hotel, for he gave the latter a signal, and then commenced to look over the registry-book. The lad Eddie was at hand, got up as a district messenger-boy. Indeed, the clerk called him over and asked what he wanted. Eddie replied, promptly:

"I was ordered to come here and wait for a gentleman."

"Ah, all right," said the clerk.

The detective, who had been looking over the hotel register, turned and listened to the question and answer, and then resumed his study of the book. The lad stood around, and at length saw the detective point to a name on the register, and heard him ask:

"Were you on duty when the lady who committed suicide registered?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember a young man who registered shortly afterward?"

"I do; but I never recalled the fact before. But now I do remember, and I put him in Room 19."

"And that is the name?"

The detective pointed, as stated, to a certain name on the register.

"Yes, that is the name."

"You recall the appearance of the man?"

"I do; and, now that I remember, he was greatly excited."

"Would you know the man if you saw him again?"

"I would."

"Did he have much baggage?"

"One very large trunk. I remember seeing it carried upstairs."

There came a strange glitter in the officer's eyes.

CHAPTER III.

THE messenger lad hung around in a listless manner. His man had not arrived. He had overheard all that passed. He was very cute.

"The man's baggage consisted of one large trunk?"

"Yes."

"When did he go away?"

"Early the following morning."

"Were you on duty when he went away?"

"No; the night clerk was in charge of the office."

"Who is in Room 19 now?"

"It is unoccupied."

"Give me the key."

"What are you on to?" asked the clerk.

The detective merely winked. Meantime, singularly enough, the messenger-boy had disappeared, and, under the excitement of their thoughts, neither the clerk nor the detective appeared to have noticed the fact. He had gone, and his man had not arrived.

The detective ascended to Room 19. He closed the door behind him, but did not lock it. He glanced around the room and muttered:

"By all that's strange and wonderful! but this is a great clew I have struck."

He commenced a search. He pulled out the drawer of the wash-stand. There lay a note. He seized it and read:

"Do not—please, do not visit me to-night. Why do you pursue me? Oh, spare me—spare me! I'll yield everything; but cease this pursuit. I will see you to-morrow. Come not to me before then." E. H."

"By the jumping skeeters of Jersey!" ejaculated the detective, "but this is a find!"

The detective read and reread the note, and then continued his search. He looked through the drawers, but saw nothing. He looked in the closet, and was about to close the door when his eye fell upon something down in the corner of the floor. He stooped down quickly and secured it, then stepped out to the clearer light near the window, and again an exclamation burst from his lips.

"By all that's wonderful!" he ejaculated, "but the evidence is piling up!"

His find this time was a tiny vial—a little glass tube really, but one large enough to hold

a dose of some powerful poison. The detective drew a large wallet from his pocket, and, after carefully wrapping the vial, he deposited it in his book. He then recommenced his search, and in time found a few other little things that to him seemed as proofs most damning.

"Well, well," he muttered, "this is a good day's work, and no mistake! A suicide, eh? Well, well, I have already proofs to establish one of the most terrible tragedies ever enacted in New York; and this—this mysterious man who occupied this room, and who had a big trunk, and who went away early in the morning—Well, well, we will meet him face to face, you bet! And the man who put me on this lay—I must see him. He is a regular gold mine of evidence. He has more to tell me. I must see him at once."

The detective again drew the letter from his pocket. He read it over once again; then he went down in his clothes and drew forth the handkerchief that he had shown to his comrade, Mattie. He unfolded it and scanned the name printed way down on one corner. He was deeply engrossed; his whole attention was concentrated on the handkerchief, when suddenly he received a thump on the head.

He sunk to the floor helpless and insensible, and over him stood, not the messenger-boy, but Eddie, the wonderful little shadow who had been on his track. The wonderful lad who had downed the great man seized the letter, the handkerchief, and also went down and secured the wallet, from which he took the little vial, and then on tiptoe he stole from the room; but before doing so he had once again become the district telegraph lad. He did not descend by the main entrance to the street. He proceeded to a private entrance. Once on the street he moved rapidly. He leaped on a car going up-town, and alighted when well up, passed the Fifth Avenue Hotel, then he turned down a cross-street, and later ascended the stoop of a fine three-story brown-stone house. He entered with a night-key, and passing to the rear room, confronted the man who had met him in the street, and who had told him that the taller of the two men had a handkerchief he wanted. As the lad entered the room the gentleman said:

"Well, Eddie, my lad, you are back?"

"I am here, sir, and I bring you the handkerchief."

The lad handed over the article named, and the gentleman glanced at it and said:

"You have brought me the right article."

"I have brought you something more. It has been a wonderful day for me."

"You are a wonderful lad."

"Let me take a little breath, and I will tell my story."

"Breathe away, my lad. You know I am never impatient."

We will not repeat his narrative—our readers know what occurred—save that we will explain how the lad had chanced to be in Room 19.

It will be remembered that the messenger-boy disappeared from the office of the hotel. He had overheard all that had passed. He ascended the stairs, climbed through the transom of Room 19, took his chances, and buried himself under the mattress, and at the proper moment he leaped out, dealt Baily a blow with an eel-skin, and secured the handkerchief and other articles, as has been described.

The gentleman listened to the lad's narration, and when he had concluded, said:

"Eddie, I would not be Old Phenomenal if it were not for you. But, my lad, let me tell you we are on the biggest mystery we ever struck. It's the dead alive, or the alive dead; but you and I will get at the bottom of this great mystery."

Old Phenomenal, as the gentleman had dubbed himself, was an old-time Western detective. It was in the South and West that he had won his great reputation. He had been a city detective for some years in St. Louis; later he had been selected by the Government to do detective work in Kentucky and Georgia among the moonshiners, and it was while engaged in the latter service that he earned the *soubriquet* "Old Phenomenal." He had done great work. He possessed all the natural qualities of a first-class detective. He was brave, skillful, and powerful physically. He was subtle and patient, and possessed wonderful qualities of mental and physical endurance. Indeed, Albert Stetson was as well fitted for his profession as any man who ever started out to track a criminal.

"By all that's wonderful!" he ejaculated,

"but the evidence is piling up!"

His find this time was a tiny vial—a little

glass tube really, but one large enough to hold

seated in the office of a hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. He was under an assumed name. He did not suppose any one in the whole city knew his identity. He had just returned after a successful raid in the mountains. He had succeeded in capturing two notorious criminals who were sought by the State officials. He had turned his captives over to the authorities, and, as stated, was at the moment under cover, when a lad walked in, and, approaching him, said, in a low tone:

"Can I have a few words with you, Mr. Stetson?"

The great detective was taken all aback. Recovering from his surprise, he looked the lad over, and said:

"I reckon you have made a mistake, sonny."

"No, I haven't made a mistake."

The detective laughed, and said:

"It's funny you should mistake me for some gentleman named Stetson."

"I guess not," answered the lad, with a knowing shake of the head.

"Who are you?" asked Old Phenomenal.

"I am a detective," came the startling answer.

"What's your name?"

"Eddie Farnam."

"How long have you been in the detective business?"

"About six months."

"Have you been on any jobs yet?"

"Yes."

"Who employed you, my lad?"

"I started in on my own hook."

"Well, what did you accomplish?"

"I gave a few good pointers to a great detective."

"Who was the detective?"

"Albert Stetson."

Again our hero was surprised.

"Where did you meet him?"

"In the mountains."

"Under what circumstances?"

"I can't tell you."

"Why not?"

"Because you are not Albert Stetson. You say I've made a mistake. If that is so I've nothing more to say."

Old Phenomenal was compelled to smile. He saw that he had run across a remarkably bright youth.

"Well, I'm sorry. I'd like to know about your meeting with the detective; but, of course, if you will only tell it to the detective himself, I've nothing to say."

The lad looked bothered a moment, and then said:

"Oh, come off!"

Our hero was highly amused.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I don't want any more of your guff."

"What do you want?"

"I want you to own up."

"What?"

"That you are the great detective whom they call Old Phenomenal."

"But I tell you that you have a mistake, my lad."

"I have not made a mistake; but I don't blame you. No, no; we detectives can't own up to every one; but you must come down from the tree to me, mister, for I've got you down fine. Yes, I have. I never set my eyes on a man that I don't know him when I see him again."

"I reckon you are a pretty smart youth."

"Oh! I ain't extra smart."

"So you really think I am Albert Stetson?"

"I know you are Albert Stetson."

"What makes you so sure?"

"I've got the bearings on you."

"Where did you get them?"

"In the mountains."

"See here, lad; tell me just what happened to you."

"Will you own up?"

"Well, we will see about it."

"That's good enough for me. Do you remember one day, when you were in the mountains, that a girl came to you when you were dodging around under the cliffs, and told you that the mooners had got your identity and were closing in on you?"

Albert Stetson did not start, but he was really surprised, and there came a strange glitter to his eyes, and he said:

"Never mind what I remember. Go on with your story. I am very much interested."

"The girl led you through a crevasse and brought you out on the top of the cliff, and you.

had a chance to measure your men over the ledge. Do you recollect all that?"

The detective was amused, and he asked:
"What do you know about the girl?"
"All about her."
"How is that?"
"I am the girl!" came the answer.

CHAPTER IV.

THE detective was deeply interested at once. He looked the lad over more critically, and after a moment said:

"So you are a girl, eh?"
There was a quizzical smile on his face as he spoke.
"Do I look like a girl?"
"No; but you said you were a girl; possibly you are under a disguise. I've heard of fellows going under a disguise."

"Well, yes; I reckon you know all about disguises," said the youth.

"But, honest, are you a girl?"

"What are you giving me?"

"You said you were a girl."

"I did not say I was a girl."

"Oh, did I misunderstand you?"

"I reckon not."

"What did you say?"

"I said I was *the* girl. I am a boy now."

Old Phenomenal was compelled to laugh outright. The lad's fine distinction was immense. Indeed, our hero had already discovered that he was talking to one of the brightest lads he had ever met.

"You *were* the girl?"

"Yes; got up for the occasion."

"And what was the occasion?"

"Will you own up square?"

"But what do you want me to own up?"

"That you are Albert Stetson."

"If I own up you will not blow on me?"

"I'd die first."

"All right; I am Stetson."

"Good enough; now we can talk."

"You say you *were* the girl?"

"Yes."

"What was the occasion?"

"I had got on to the fact that the mooners had run you down, so I got up for safety, and started out to give you the pointer."

"What were you doing in the mountains?"

"I was on a trail. Yes, I shadowed down a heap of those fellows."

"Come, my lad, tell me all about yourself."

"There is not much to tell. I've started in to be a detective."

"How did you come to form such a resolution?"

"Because I thought I'd like the business better than farming."

"What does your father say to your becoming a detective?"

"I have no father."

"Your father is dead?"

"Yes."

"How long has he been dead?"

"About two years."

"Have you a mother?"

"No; my mother died when I was five years old, and, as I said, my father died about two years ago. After he died my uncle took me on his farm. You see, my father fell off after my mother's death and got into bad habits. He lost his farm, and when he died he was a farm hand; yes, sir, working at day's work, and he had the best blood in the State in his veins."

"And after his death you went with your uncle?"

"Yes; my father's step-brother. I did not go with him, he took me."

"He was kind to you, then?"

"Was he? Well, I guess not. It was not a good heart that led him to adopt me. He knew I was a good worker. He knew he'd get a man's work out of me, and only pay me board and clothes. Well, I didn't object to that, but he didn't treat me right. He let me go to school one winter, but the next winter he started in to keep me at work all the time. Said he couldn't afford to let me go to school, and then I quit."

"You quit?"

"Yes, I did. One rainy night I skipped away and went to St. Louis. I knocked around there a year, and then I made up my mind to settle down for life. I had worked around on the levee, and I had saved a few dollars, so I came down here and started into the mountains. I read an item in the papers about you. I made up my mind to follow you up. I went into the mountains and was hunting around

when I fell to the game of the mooners. Then I struck out and found you."

"Why didn't you tell me about yourself then?"

"I didn't have a chance. You remember when you left me I was to meet you again and give you some more information."

"Yes, I remember; and you didn't show up."

"No."

"Why not?"

"Those fellows nipped me, and I had a close call."

"How?"

"Well, I rather think they would have sent me dancing on nothing, only they didn't like to swing a girl. I played it well, you bet, and they just locked me in a room up in a distillery. They kept me there two weeks, and then one day I gave 'em the slip. I hung around, dodging here and there, until I found out that you had closed in on them. I started to hunt you up, and here I am."

"You are a great fellow, Eddie."

"I mean business."

"And what is your intention?"

"I want to go in with you as an apprentice. I don't want any pay, only my board and clothes, and I'll be of good service to you."

"But your uncle?"

"He has nothing to do with me. I'll never go back to him. I'd put lead in my pocket and go to the bottom of the river first."

"Have you any other relatives?"

"I've a sister somewhere in California; but she is ten years older than I am. I haven't seen her since I was five years old. She was adopted and went away."

"Have you ever heard from her?"

"No; I do not know whether she is living or dead."

"And you want to come with me?"

"Yes, as an apprentice. I am bound to be a detective, whether you take me or not."

"I'll take you, Eddie," said the detective; and, as we have related, our hero secured his little aid, and for two years he had proved a valuable one.

He had formed a great attachment for the lad, and the youth had become possessed of an experience that made him practically the equal of any detective in the land, as far as intelligence and cunning go. He was physically a strong fellow, and having been brought up on a farm, was vigorous and healthy.

Our hero had visited New York on a special case. He had brought his credentials with him. He was well known at head-quarters by reputation, and had once met the chief of the New York force, but he had not made known his presence in New York at the time our narrative opens, and consequently was not known to the men on the force.

Accident had given Albert Stetson early knowledge of the supposed suicide, and he went to work at once to investigate it, as the business he had in hand made it necessary for him to take in all discoveries of dead girls that might be called to his attention. He was on a search for a missing lady who had disappeared under very singular circumstances, and the latter was the occasion of his visit to New York.

While Albert Stetson was listening to the very thrilling narrative of his little aid, Eddie Farnam, a rather remarkable scene was being enacted at the hotel where the city detective, Baily, had been so cleverly and mysteriously laid out.

When the man had been knocked to the floor he had been only momentarily stunned. He speedily recovered from the effects of the blow and rose to his feet, but for a moment or two he was a little dazed. When the dizziness passed away, and he began to realize what had occurred, an oath fell from his lips.

"Well, I got it again. Hang me if I have not struck an influence that seems to have paralyzed me. But let me see; what was the object of the rap I got?"

He stood a moment, and then recalled that at the time he had been hit he held the tell-tale handkerchief in his hand.

He looked on the floor, felt in his pockets, and at length murmured:

"It's gone!"

He looked, and there was his wallet on the floor. He picked it up, opened it out, and again he exclaimed:

"Great Caesar!"

Tom Baily remained a few moments in the room. He resumed his investigations, but found nothing to reward his search. He finally

left the room and descended to the office. He went up to the clerk, and the latter asked:

"Well, what did you make out?"

"Nothing much. But who followed me up to that room?"

"No one."

"Who was in the office here when I was talking to you?"

"No one but that messenger lad."

The detective started.

"Oh, yes! I remember the messenger-boy. What became of him?"

"It's likely he got tired of waiting and went away."

The detective also went away, and as he walked along he muttered:

"I'm a fool! I've been played; but one thing is certain—there is something in all this. I will see the man who met me at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. I will make that fellow open up. Yes, I will, or choke the life out of him!"

The detective had not gone far before he was joined by his pard, Mattie.

"Well, old man, what did you make out?"

"I made out," came the equivocal answer.

"Did you ever meet the writer of the note?"

"Yes, I did."

"Was there anything in it?"

"I should say so."

"Open up, will you?"

"Yes, I will."

Tom Baily told his tale, and his pard listened with deepest attention; and when the statement was concluded, said:

"Tom, this beats anything in all our experience."

"It does."

"Who gave you the thump?"

"Mattie, I'd give a thousand dollars to be able to answer that question. Whoever it was would take a lashing from me that would lay him up for a spell, you bet!"

"It couldn't have been the messenger-lad?"

"No; but he may have been at the bottom of it all."

"How?"

"He gave the information to some one else. That fellow was there for a purpose. I now recall that he could overhear every word that passed between me and the clerk, and must have dropped out without our noticing it and given the points."

"It's strange."

"Yes, it is very strange, Mattie, the strangest experience of my life."

"And what do you make out of it all?"

"Some deep devil has got the dead shadow on us."

CHAPTER V.

OLD PHENOMENAL had made up his mind that there was a deep mystery connected with the supposed suicide; in this he agreed with Tom Baily. He also had made up his mind that it was not a suicide, and he had made certain other discoveries which will be revealed later on.

He had listened to Eddie, as has been detailed. Having sat for a long time thinking all the matters over, he asked:

"Eddie, what sort of a looking chap was the fellow who met Baily at the Fifth Avenue Hotel?"

"He is a villain, a skin of the first water."

"What do you mean by a skin of the first water?"

"I mean he is a cowardly schemer—a man as cunning as the devil himself, but a regular coward."

"How old a man?"

"About forty."

"And you tracked him?"

"I did."

"You say he entered a respectable house?"

"Yes."

"He is the man we want to get on to, Eddie."

"That is what I thought."

"You thought something else."

"Yes."

"Well, out with it, my lad."

"It was a put-up job on Baily."

"How?"

"He put the vial in the room. He knew just what Baily would find there."

Albert Stetson smiled. He enjoyed the cuteness of his little aid. He was in the habit of encouraging an expression of opinion. Old Phenomenal had already reached the same conclusion. To him the matter was as clear as

day, and he seldom went astray in his conclusions.

"Eddie," said the detective, "I want you to shadow the man you saw at the hotel."

"I expected you would."

"Don't address him; don't go too far. Just get on to him and his haunts. I want to take a look at him."

"All right; I'm off."

The lad left the apartment and proceeded direct to the vicinity of the house he had seen the man enter. He lay around all the afternoon, and as evening approached he just managed to run into a saloon, snatch a bite, and he was on duty again. He lay around until about eight o'clock, when he saw the door of the house open, and he muttered:

"There he is at last, and he has changed his make-up."

When the man came forth, Eddie started on a straight shadow. He saw the man go to a hotel reading-room, where he looked over the papers. He was at the man's shoulders, and saw that he was reading about the latest sensation, and as the man read through the lad watched his countenance, and saw a look of disappointment illuminate it, and Eddie muttered:

"He's looking for something he don't find there."

The lad was a keener, and he heard the man mutter:

"Hang it! he hasn't given it out yet, and he has had ample time. He must have found the things, or he's no good."

"Ahal!" muttered Eddie; "he expected Baily to blow on his find, eh? Well, there is good reason why Baily is silent."

As the lad made the latter remark there came a glimmer in his eyes, and a smile flitted over his face.

The man made several other muttered remarks, all of which Eddie noted and put away to repeat to his benefactor. The man at length threw the paper aside and left the hotel and Eddie followed at his heels.

The man proceeded to a certain quarter of the city, and commenced to pace up and down before a fine-looking house. Eddie at first thought that he was pacing in an aimless manner, but soon he made up his mind that the man had a purpose. The little detective was a keen watcher. He saw a shade raised in the house; he saw a handsome woman appear at the window; he saw her make a signal; he saw the man he had been shadowing enter it and then walk away.

The lad had seen the woman's face, and he knew he would recognize her if he should see her again.

The man, after sending a return signal, walked away, and the lad followed until he saw his game enter a place, the character of which he did not understand. He stood watching the door-way through which the man had passed, until he saw a young man straggling past, and he asked:

"Is that a billiard-room?"

"No; it's a menagerie."

"Do they keep animals up there?"

"No; they only keep one animal up there. Are you a stranger in the city?"

"Yes."

"What are you looking for?"

"A boarding-house."

"Well, you need not go up there, bub."

"Why not?"

"Because it's a tiger's den."

Eddie took just what was meant, and he was at a stand-still. He knew his man would probably make a night of it. He knew he would not be permitted to enter the place—boys are not admitted—and after taking in the surroundings, he said to himself:

"I reckon I'll report."

He returned to the lodgings, where his master awaited him.

"Did you find your man, my lad?"

"I did. I followed him to No. — Twenty-Second Street. He stopped before a house and signaled to a handsome woman."

"Ahal! there is a woman in the case!"

"From there he went to a place on a street leading from Broadway."

"Well?"

"He went upstairs."

"Well?"

"I think he will stay there awhile, so I reported back."

"What makes you think so?"

"It's a tiger's den."

"Ah! I see. The man is going to get into a game."

Old Phenomenal thought awhile, and then said:

"I will go and follow up the man—that's all right—and you go and see what you can pick up about the woman."

Eddie described the location of the gambling-saloon, and then started out. A word to him was sufficient. He walked toward the house where the signals had been exchanged, and was going on in a quiet manner, when he espied the detective, Tom Baily.

"I wonder what that man is up to now? I reckon I'll let the lady go for a few moments and follow him."

Eddie started to follow the detective. He saw him go to the Fifth Avenue Hotel. He entered the same reading-room where he had held the former interview with the man. Eddie also entered the reading-room. He hung around until the detective departed, and he followed him out, and was walking along on a close trail. He kept to his shadow until he saw his man enter a house. The lad stopped before the door and was taking the bearings, when suddenly he was seized from behind. He found himself in a powerful grasp, and ere one could twice repeat Jack Robinson he was hustled into the house into which he had seen Tom Baily go. He did not make a fight. He tumbled to the situation, and mentally he muttered:

"I wasn't cute enough. After all, I've been hooked."

When he found opportunity and voice, he demanded:

"What do you mean? Why do you bring me in here?"

Eddie was hustled into the back parlor of the house, and there sat Tom Baily and his partner, Mattie, said, as he shoved Eddie into the room:

"Here's a nice sea-robin I've captured."

Tom Baily looked Eddie over from head to foot, and said, after a moment:

"Sit down, sonny."

"No, I won't sit down! Why did you men bring me in here?"

"We want to talk with you."

"I don't want to talk."

"Oh, yes, you do. I've seen you before, my son."

"I've never seen you before, and you will suffer for this."

"That's all right, but what were you doing down to the — Hotel?"

"I wasn't in the — Hotel to-day."

"Oh, don't give me that. I saw you there. You were to meet a gentleman. What station do you belong to, eh?"

"I don't belong to any station."

"Aren't you a messenger-lad?"

"No, I am not."

"Then you were only playing messenger-boy, eh?"

"I wasn't playing messenger-boy, and if you don't let me go home you fellows will suffer."

"I fear you will never go home again."

"You fellows can't scare me."

Mattie exchanged some signs with his partner, and the latter nodded knowingly, and continuing his talk with Eddie, said:

"Young fellow, I saw you to-day. You were got up as a messenger-lad; you were at the — Hotel; you were waiting for a gentleman."

"If you know just what I was doing, why do you ask me any questions?"

"I think I know the man you were waiting for."

"That's all right; you may know all about it, but I don't."

"You are a very smart lad, you are."

"Thank you."

"I have a mind to take you to the station-house."

"I wish you would."

"Maybe you are too willing, after all."

"I am willing."

Again Mattie exchanged signals with his partner, and then said:

"Tom, I think we've struck the wrong lad."

"What would you advise?"

"I do not think we have any use for this fellow."

"And shall we let him go?"

"Yes."

"You'll be sorry if you find out afterward that you've made a mistake."

"I made a mistake when I captured him."

We will let him go."

A moment later and Eddie was free.

CHAPTER VI.

EDDIE wasn't fooled at all. He saw through the whole game, and he knew just what the two men were up to, and he muttered:

"Well, when these two foxes catch this weasel asleep, they will get up a great deal earlier in the morning."

After Eddie had been freed, Baily said:

"You've made a mistake."

"How?"

"That lad is the fellow we want."

"You think so?"

"Yes. The lad is working for some one else."

"I don't know about that."

"He will go straight to his boss."

"Well?"

"The man who is working that lad is the old man who was in the room when the examination took place."

"By gosh, Mattie, I believe you are right!"

"That old man is on to this case."

"Dead certain! But how about the other fellow?"

"The one you met at the Fifth Avenue?"

"Yes."

"Who gave you the points?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure it is not one and the same person?"

"I am sure the man I met at the Fifth Avenue is not the old fellow."

"And you are dead sure there are two men in the case?"

"Yes."

"He knew what you would find in that room?"

"Dead sure!"

"He is not the man who afterward secured your prizes."

"Then who did get them?"

"The messenger boy communicated."

"And then you suspect?"

"That it was not the Fifth Avenue chap, but another man, who put the lad on your track."

"And that other man was?"

"In my opinion the old fellow."

The above conversation passed rapidly, and while the two men were keeping the lad Eddie in sight they had fallen far back, but held to the shadow. They were, as has been intimated all along, two really sharp men. They separated, but both kept to the trail.

In the meantime, Eddie was up to snuff, as the saying goes. He was well aware that the two men were following him. He had got right down to their game, and as he sped along he muttered:

"I'll give 'em a throw off, and don't you forget it, my dear little self."

The lad wandered along in an indifferent sort of way, but his glance was wandering also. He was looking for a good chance to give his pursuers a clean drop out. Fortune favored him. There came an alarm of fire; an engine was seen rushing down the street; there was a rush and scatter in every direction.

He started on a run. He ran with the engine, and he was a runner. The engine was drawn by horses going at a swift gallop, but our little detective kept up with them. The engine turned down a side street. Eddie went around in company with it. He was traveling with the speed of deer. He came to an alley-way. He looked over his shoulder. His pursuers were not in sight; they had not turned the corner. The boy made a spring, and in less time than it takes to tell it he was over the fence.

"Bully for me!" he laughed, and he peeped through a little opening. Luck favored him. The two detectives came together just opposite to where he was concealed. It was not an unexpected result.

"He's dropped us," said Mattie.

"Yes; he has given us the slip."

"Tom, we're losing our heads."

"It seems so."

"Every one we strike appears to be smarter than we are."

"So it seems. But we are but just starting in on this game. We will come out all right yet."

As our readers will remember, Albert Stetson had gone to trail down the man who had given the points on the vial and other little articles that had been found in the room, and which were tell-tale testimonies leading toward a solution of the mystery.

Eddie had given the detective an accurate description of the man, and had pointed out the place he had seen the man enter. Old Ph-

nomenal took the bearings. He did not enter the place at once, but just took a survey; and he was so engaged when he saw the very man he was trailing come from the building.

"Aha! here we are," was his muttered comment.

The man was not alone. There was a hard-featured fellow with him, and the two men proceeded along, and were engaged in an earnest conversation.

"I'd like to overhear what is passing between those two men," said the detective.

The opportunity, however, did not occur. The men walked and walked, and finally separated.

Old Phenomenal, when the men separated, followed the man he had started out to shadow. He paid no attention to the other man, and after taking a few precautions and making a few straight observations, he reached the conclusion that the men had not observed his actions. He followed his man for some time, and at length saw him go to a certain house and go through the same motions that Eddie had witnessed.

The detective had not seen the handsome woman that Eddie had described. He only saw the signal made by the man, but he knew there were both initiative and answering signals exchanged.

A moment the detective stopped and considered, and he said:

"This is the house to which Eddie tracked that man. It was here he saw the handsome woman at the time of the former signals. There must have been some reason why the fellow did not enter the house. Since then the circumstances have changed, and he has entered. This man, and this woman whom I have not seen, are in some way connected with the mystery. They will have a talk. I must get into that house and hear what is said, and I have no time to lose."

Special detectives frequently take long chances. Our hero determined to enter the house at all risks. He had passed and repassed the house several times, and finally darted into the basement; but the next instant he felt himself collared, a club was held menacingly over his head, and a harsh voice exclaimed:

"I've got you now, my man!"

Al Stetson was perfectly cool.

"Don't make any noise about it," he said.

"You were about to enter this house?"

"Talk low, will you?"

"You will go with me," said the officer.

"Certainly I will go with you; but don't make so much noise about it."

The officer held our hero by the collar of his coat and led him forth.

"You needn't hold on to me."

"Do you think I am going to let you run away after having made the capture? If you attempt to do so, I'll shoot you down."

"I will not run away."

The officer released his hold, and he led the way, not to the station-house, but in another direction. The man led him across town, and on the way said but little, merely muttering occasionally:

"I caught you good and square."

At length the man stopped in front of a house, and as he did so he again seized our hero.

"You will come in here," he said.

"This is not a police station."

"And do you want to go to a police-station?"

"Certainly."

"There is a man in here who will have a talk with you, and then you will be locked up soon enough, never fear."

"You are not doing your duty."

"Ah! you will give me lessons in my duty, eh?"

"Yes."

"See here, mister, you may compel me to use my club on you."

"Why do you take me in here?"

"This is the private residence of the district-attorney. He wants to have a talk with you."

We will here remark that the policeman appeared to be a little bewildered. He did not seem to fully understand the quiet manner in which his prisoner had submitted to arrest, but it suited him, all the same. So he made no comment.

"Why do you take me to him?"

"Because I have orders to do so."

"You were laying for me?"

"Yes."

"Somebody gave you information."

"That's my business."

"But you can tell me."

"Will you go in quietly with me?"

"Yes, I will," was the answer.

CHAPTER VII.

OLD PHENOMENAL had fallen to a discovery which will be explained to our readers later on, and it was this discovery that caused him to proceed quietly with the man who had arrested him. His discovery had led him also to a second very singular conclusion. Had he been a man of less nerve and courage he would not have consented to enter the house, as he was well aware that he faced a great peril. The latter, however, was something he had become inured to, and he was prepared for all consequences when he said, "Yes, I will."

The officer again seized hold of our hero, and led him up the stoop. He seemed to fear that his man might attempt to run away. He did not ring the bell, but entered the house with a night-key. The latter was an incident that, to say the least, was very peculiar under all the circumstances.

Once in the house, the officer released his hold, and said:

"Follow me!"

They entered the rear room of the house, and the officer said:

"Sit down."

Old Phenomenal obeyed.

A few moments passed, and a man entered the room. He said to the officer:

"You can go; but be on hand in case I need you."

The officer who had made the arrest left the room, and the man who had given the order said said to the detective:

"Come up here and take a seat opposite to me. I want to talk with you."

When the man gave the order he seated himself at a table in the center of the floor, and motioned to our hero where to sit. The latter did as he was directed. There was a chandelier right over their heads, and several burners had been lighted.

The man coolly looked our hero all over, and finally said:

"I do not remember having seen you before."

And our hero answered:

"I do not remember having seen you before."

"Who are you?" demanded the man.

"I am a burglar."

The man did not appear at all surprised at receiving the answer, but a smile overspread his face.

"You do not appear to be at all abashed in making the confession."

"No."

"You are not a burglar."

"Who am I?"

"That is what I mean to learn."

"Who are you?"

"There is no need for me to tell you who I am."

"Oh, you are merely seeking to learn whom I am?"

"Yes."

"I was told I was to meet the district attorney."

"Who told you that?"

"The fellow who arrested me—the fraud dressed in policeman's clothes."

The man gave a little start, and said:

"So you do not think it was an officer who arrested you?"

"No; I am sure it was not an officer."

"But you came along quietly, I understand?"

"Certainly."

"Why is it you offered no resistance, knowing the man who arrested you was not an officer?"

"I wanted to meet you."

"You wanted to meet me?" came the comment, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes, I wanted to meet you."

"Well, you have met me now; what have you to say?"

"Nothing."

"Then why are you here?"

"I was brought here, and it is my turn to ask why I was brought here."

"I wanted to see you."

"I repeat your remark. I am here; what have you to say?"

The man whom our hero was facing was, as we have intimated, a cool, determined man, but he appeared to be a little disconcerted by our hero's singular manner and boldness.

"I want to ask you a few questions," said the man.

"All right; ask your questions."

"You say you intended to enter that house where you were captured?"

"I didn't say so, but I will admit that it was my intention to do so."

"And what was your purpose?"

"I meant to steal."

"I know better than that. If it was your purpose to enter that house to steal you would not be so frank in admitting it; and when you admit it so frankly it betrays the fact that you wish to conceal your real motive."

"Your reasoning is good; but I did mean to steal into that house; so, you see, I told the truth."

"You are a facetious chap."

"I am; so are you. And now, what is your game?"

"You think I have a game?"

"I know you have a game."

"What makes you think so?"

"You are a man of sense."

"Thank you."

"Can you not see that I am also?"

"Well?"

"Your whole procedure has been very strange. It means that you are playing a game. You dress a man up in a policeman's clothes and you send him to make an arrest. He carried out your instructions. I am his prisoner. I am here. I came willingly. Let us be frank. I have a game; you have a game. Now, what is your game?"

"I asked you a question."

"Did you?"

"I asked you what your purpose was in seeking to enter that house."

"I will not tell you until you open up to me," came the answer.

Our hero's answer appeared to disconcert the man, and he said, after a moment's meditation:

"I'll show you something."

"Good enough. I always was fond of a good show."

The man touched a bell, and immediately four masked men appeared in the doorway. They held in their hands a rope, one end of which had been worked into a noose, and the man who held that part of the rope made several very suggestive motions with it. Our hero looked at the show, and there was a smile on his face as he said, coolly:

"Western style, I see."

"Rather surprising, is it not, right here in the center of New York?"

"Oh, no! Strange things are happening every day in this city."

"What would you think of a private lynching?"

"Quite amusing. I presume you have a man you wish to lynch."

"Yes."

"And you have brought me here to witness the execution?"

"No; I brought you here as the victim."

"Oh, you are very fair to tell me."

"I want you to know one thing."

"It won't burden me to carry one thing."

"You are very flippant; but this is a serious matter."

"I thought it was a farce."

"It may end in a tragedy."

"Let's come down to business. What are you up to, anyhow?"

"I want some information."

"And suppose I give you some information?"

"You're all right."

"Is this thing to be all one sided?"

"What do you mean?"

"If I give you some information, will you be equally compliant?"

"I may."

The detective had been playing for time and probing for data. He had reached a certain conclusion. He was a cool man, and all the time he had been studying and contrasting, and, as has been stated, he had reached a certain conclusion, and had also decided upon a certain course of action. He felt assured his conclusions were correct, and that is why he resolved to go right ahead.

"I am not certain I can give you any real information. I will try."

"That is good."

"You know something about the suicide that occurred at the — Hotel the other night?"

The man started.

Up to that moment he had been cool and steady, but our hero's last words threw him off.

his guard. He turned pale, actually trembled, and there came a strange, wild gleam in his eyes, and in a low tone he muttered:

"Aha, I thought so!"

"You have not answered me," said Old Phenomenal.

"What did you say? Repeat it."

"I said you knew something about the suicide that occurred at the —— Hotel."

"I read about it in the papers."

"Did you see the body?"

"No."

"All right. I am done."

"No; you will go on."

"My friend, we do not understand each other yet."

"I am seeking an understanding."

"We will talk plain."

"Yes."

"I do not scare. I care no more for your men there with the rope than I do for a fly on the wall. You think I am in your power. On the contrary, you are in mine. You did not understand why I came along so quietly. You should be able to guess now. You should understand now why I said I wanted to see you."

"And did you want to see me?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

CHAPTER VIII.

The detective, as has been intimated, had determined upon his course, and he said:

"I had an idea that there was some one in this house who knew something about the dead girl."

The man to whom our hero was talking exhibited considerable agitation and nervousness. He turned pale and trembled, and once again in an earnest tone demanded:

"Who are you?"

"It matters not who I am."

"What do you know about the dead girl?"

"That is my business."

"Tell me what interest you have in the dead girl."

"No interest."

"Then there is no need for us to talk further. I will go away."

"You are not at liberty to go."

"We will see about that. Who will stop me from going?"

"I will."

The detective rose, and the man rose also. He drew a revolver, and at the same instant the four men rushed into the room. Our hero had calculated every chance. He was ready. Quick as a flash he turned off the gas. The men were in darkness. It was evident the man had not calculated upon such decided measures. There followed a rush, and then followed also several blows, which sounded dead and heavy. And again there followed several heavy falls, like men knocked suddenly off their feet. And then all was still. Old Phenomenal had been to work in the dark. He lighted the gas, and a strange sight was revealed. Five men lay stretched upon the floor. Four of them were pretty badly hurt, as it appeared. The fifth man was able to rise to his feet. But he was covered with the muzzle of a revolver, and the detective said:

"Do not move, or you are a dead man!"

The man did not heed the warning. He leaped forward and grappled with Al Stetson. A desperate struggle followed. But the detective was the more active man of the two, and he possessed equal strength with his antagonist. He bore his man to the floor, and held him pinned, and then he said:

"It is useless for you to struggle against me."

"You are an assassin!"

"Am I? Not much. But what are you? Did you not let in those hounds on me to murder me? You are now at my mercy. But I will not harm you. I am your friend, that is, I think you and I will be friends."

"I looked upon you as an enemy."

"I know you did; but there you were mistaken. Now, listen: you are cornered. I do not mean to harm you. I would be justified, as an attack was made upon me."

"No harm was intended."

"Well, that is cool. It does not look as though any harm was intended."

"I had given orders."

"What were your orders?"

"To make you a prisoner."

"You are my prisoner."

"You are a great man."

"Thank you. If I let you rise, will you be quiet, and come to a fair understanding?"

"I will."

"Then rise."

The detective permitted his man to rise, and the same privilege was extended to the four men who had been laid out.

"You had better bid your men retire. You and I must talk alone."

The four men, all surprised, one after another rose to their feet. Not one of them was bleeding, and yet they had been knocked to partial insensibility.

The men, as stated, rose to their feet. They were dazed, but the man bid them leave the room. They obeyed, and our hero said:

"We have had quite a singular little adventure."

"I do not understand it; but I am accustomed to accepting the inevitable."

"A good experience. And now let us talk."

"I am ready."

"If you will answer me one question we may reach an understanding."

"Let me hear your question."

"Have you any interest in the dead girl?"

"I have."

"I thought so. What is your interest?"

"I can not tell you."

"One more question."

"Just as I feared. You will now press me with questions I can not answer."

"It will be better for the dead and the living if you do answer my questions."

"I can not answer your questions."

"Are you a friend of the man who lives in the house on —— Street?"

"I will answer your question on one condition."

"Name it."

"I will answer your question on condition that I know who you are."

The detective was thoughtful a moment, and then said:

"I see no reason why I should not comply with your condition."

"Do so."

"I am a detective."

"And engaged on this case?"

"No."

"Not engaged on this case?"

"I have engaged myself."

"In whose interest?"

"You are pressing questions upon me now."

"It is very important that you should answer my questions."

"I have answered your questions more freely than you have answered mine. It is your turn now."

"What is your name?"

"Albert Stetson."

The man started and said:

"You are known as Old Phenomenal?"

"Some of my friends call me Old Phenomenal."

"And you are engaged on this case?"

"I have started in on this case."

"And what have you learned?"

The detective smiled and said:

"This is all one-sided."

"It is? Well, I will open up soon enough."

"When?"

"When I make sure I am talking to the right party."

"You are talking to the right party. You should be fully convinced, I reckon."

"Yes, you have performed a phenomenal deed in this house."

"Well, yes, I should say so, as things go."

"I propose to tell my story."

"That is right, and in the end it will be better for you."

"But first answer me: What do you know about the case?"

"I only know the girl was murdered."

"Murdered?"

"Yes."

"It is supposed to be a suicide."

"Well, I have told you all I know about the case."

"How is it you started in on it?"

"Well, it struck me there was a mystery behind that dead girl."

"It was this idea that led you to go into it?"

"Yes."

"Do you know anything about the parties in the house on —— Street?"

"I only suspect."

"You know something about the dead girl?"

"I do."

"I have been frank with you?"

"Yes."

"Then it is time you told me something."

"I will."

"Proceed."

"You know nothing as to the identity of the dead girl?"

"No; and now, before you proceed, tell me who you are."

"My name is Edward Kalley."

"Proceed, Mr. Kalley."

"It is a strange story I have to tell."

"You can tell it to me."

"I will. I went to college with a young man named George Heath. He was the son of an artist, and he was poor. He was a manly fellow, and we became quite intimate. He had a sister—a beautiful girl. He showed me her photograph. I graduated from college a year ahead of my friend and went to Europe. I did not see her hear from him for three or four years; and then I received a letter, and in his letter he made a strange revelation. He said he had suddenly become very rich, and explained his accession to riches by the narration of a most remarkable and romantic story. He said he was traveling on a steamboat, and an old man fell overboard. He leaped into the river and saved the old man's life. After the rescue he gave his name to the old man, and a year later he was visited by a man who paid over to him one million dollars in United States bonds. He told me also that he was not in good health, that he had made a will, bequeathing all his property to his sister, and he also stated that if I returned to America before his death he would make me executor of the estate and guardian of his sister, who lacked two years of being of age."

"How long ago did you receive that letter?"

"About a year ago."

"Did you ever receive another letter?"

"No, not from him."

"Proceed."

"About three months ago I received a letter from a lady. She said her name was Adele Heath. She said she was a sister to George Heath. She desired me to return to America. She informed me that her brother was dead, and that she wished me to identify her as his sister, in order that she might take possession of his estate."

There came a strange light in the detective's eyes as he muttered:

"I begin to see into this thing."

"No, you can not discern what I have to relate."

"Proceed."

"One of the most damnable plots has been conceived that was ever attempted by a gang of conspirators."

"Go on with your narrative."

"I returned to the United States, and in due time called upon the lady who had written to me."

The narrator came to a dead halt in his story.

"Proceed," said our hero.

"Yes," resumed the speaker, "I called upon the lady, and at once saw into the devilish scheme."

CHAPTER IX.

There followed a moment's silence, and then Edward Kalley said:

"Yes, at a glance I discerned the great fraud."

"Well, what was it you discovered?"

"I discovered that there was a scheme on foot to rob the true heiress."

"How did you discover it?"

"I had received a letter from a lady purporting to have been sent by the sister of my dead friend."

"Yes."

"I called."

"Yes."

"But the young lady was not the sister of my dead friend."

"She was not your friend's sister?"

"No."

"Explain."

"I saw at a glance that I was in the presence of a woman representing herself to be my dead friend's sister."

"What did you do?"

"I listened to her story, and when she said a friend of hers—a lawyer—would call upon me, I said: 'All right.'"

"And this friend called upon you?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I opened up the truth to him."

"You told him it was a fraud?"

"Yes; and I told him I knew the true heiress was still living."

"What did he say?"

"He stormed and raved, and called me a villain. I warned him that I would defeat the conspiracy—that I would produce the real heiress—and he went away after denouncing me in the vilest manner."

"On what ground did they seek to make it appear that the lady was your friend's sister?"

"On the ground of a most singular and remarkable resemblance."

"Had you ever seen the sister of your friend?"

"Yes."

"She knew you?"

"No; she had never seen me to know me. I had seen her photograph, and once I met her in company with her brother. They did not see me. I saw them, and her face made a remarkable impression upon my mind. I can never forget her face."

"Have you seen her since you met with the woman who claimed to be the heiress?"

"No."

"How is that?"

"I started in to find her, but one night I was assaulted, and it was evidently the intention of my assailants to murder me. They believed they had succeeded, but I recovered, and I have started in to find the real heiress and defeat the scheme of these devils."

"Who was the woman who died or committed suicide at the —— Hotel?"

"Ah, there comes the mystery!"

"You saw that body?"

"I did."

"And did you recognize it?"

"No."

"And what is the game?"

"I do not know. I am not certain that the suicide or murder is connected in any way with the affair of which I have told you."

"I think I can aid you."

"Do so."

"The man who lives at —— Street."

"The woman lives there."

"What woman?"

"The woman who claims to be Adele Heath."

"And there is a man goes there?"

"I suppose the man to whom I denounced her."

"I will describe the man."

"Do so."

The detective described the man he had shadowed to the house on —— Street, and Edward Kalley exclaimed:

"That is the man!"

"That is the man who called on you in behalf of the claimant?"

"Yes."

"Did you know the man was in communication with her?"

"I suspected it. I did not know it for a certainty."

"He went there to-night?"

"I suppose so."

"What was your scheme in capturing me?"

"There was a certain man going there."

"Who is the man?"

"I do not know him. I put up a scheme to capture him."

"And what was your intention?"

"I intended to force him to a confession."

"The man who called on you does visit the house?"

"Yes, I thought so; but it was the other man I wished to take prisoner."

"Now I have a revelation to make."

"Well?"

"The woman who lives at —— Street is interested in the case of the woman whose body was found at the —— Hotel."

"How did you run down that fact?"

"The man who called on you I know is working a scheme in connection with the dead woman."

"How did you ascertain the fact?"

"I shadowed down to it; and I have fully verified my suspicions."

"It is strange; but you have certainly run down to a fact?"

"I have; and I will solve the whole mystery."

"Is there a mystery?"

"I should say there was."

"In what does the mystery consist?"

"The woman whose body was found at the hotel was not a suicide."

"Then she was murdered?"

There was a peculiar expression in Kalley's

eyes and a strange inflection in the tones of his voice as he spoke, and the detective, in an equally peculiar tone, asked:

"Was she?"

"Yes."

"What do you think?"

"I am anxious to know what you suspect."

"I suspect nothing."

The detective spoke truthfully. He had proof, but did not chose to state his facts, and after a moment, he asked:

"Do you know a person named Essie Hinsdale?"

"I do know such a person."

"Well, tell me about her."

"Essie Hinsdale is the real name of the woman who is seeking to palm herself off as Adele Heath."

It was the detective's turn to give a little start, and he ejaculated:

"Aha! that's the way the wind blows, eh?"

"Tell me what you mean."

"First I will ask you a question. Your answer may lead to a conclusion. Would Essie Hinsdale have any purpose in making it appear she was dead?"

"Yes."

"What would be her purpose?"

"I think they would like to make me think she was dead."

"Ah! I see."

"And have you reached a conclusion?"

"I am driving home to several conclusions. Who is the executor of the estate of your friend George Heath?"

"Isidor Alvarez."

"And if he goes into court and acknowledges this woman Essie Hinsdale as the heiress, she will get the money?"

"Yes."

"Why does she not do so?"

"That is a part of their scheme I do not understand."

"Where is the girl Adele Heath?"

"That I do not know."

"You believe she still lives?"

"That is what I suspect."

"Under what circumstances did George Heath die?"

"He is reported to have died of typhoid fever in a hospital while traveling with this man Isidor Alvarez."

"And who is this man Alvarez?"

"He was George Heath's physician."

"Have you seen any one who saw George Heath after his death?"

"No one who could identify him."

"Where did George Heath die?"

"It has been made to appear that he died in a hospital here in New York."

"Have you been able to ascertain when George Heath was last seen alive by a disinterested friend?"

"No."

"And you have not learned anything concerning the sister?"

"No."

"Do you discern the motive in seeking to make you believe that Essie Hinsdale is dead?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"The proofs of her death are for future use."

"How?"

"In a trial."

"What trial do they anticipate?"

"They fear I will come in and dispute the will."

"Has the will been offered for probate?"

"Not in this county."

"Then you do not know who is the residuary legatee?"

"No."

The detective was thoughtful a moment, and then said:

"We must trace the last positively known whereabouts of Adele and George Heath."

CHAPTER X.

"CAN we do that?" inquired Kalley, in answer to our hero's remark.

"I think we can."

"I have tried to do so, and I have failed."

"I know how to go about it. And now about yourself. Who are the men in this house?"

"They are a part of the crew of my yacht."

"You are a rich young man, I suppose?"

"I possess a very moderate fortune."

"Have you any special interest in this affair?"

"George Heath was my friend, that is all, and I am a sort of Monte-Cristo. I do not wish this wrong to succeed."

"I wish you to make me a promise."

"Well?"

"Leave it all to me. I will report to you from time to time, and if I need your aid I will call upon you."

"I agree to that."

"I will see you to-morrow. In the meantime you will furnish me what data you have."

Kalley produced a photograph. The detective saw that it was the face of a very beautiful girl, and after looking at it critically, he asked:

"Does the woman Essie Hinsdale bear any resemblance to this picture?"

"Yes, there is a very striking resemblance; but the woman who is seeking to steal the fortune is older, and although, as I admit, there is a singular resemblance, still it would not deceive one who had seen Adele."

"Have you a picture of George Heath?"

Kalley produced a second photograph. The detective beheld the counterpart of a very handsome young man.

"How did you come in possession of these?"

"The first picture I received from my friend. I saw the name of the photographer on the card. I went to him, and he had a negative of the sister for a price. I secured it."

"You will let me have these pictures?"

"You may keep them."

The detective held some further talk with Kalley, and then departed. He had been about two hours and a half in the house. He had its bearings fixed in his mind. He found it was well on to midnight, and he determined to return to the house where he had seen the man Alvarez enter. He arrived in the vicinity of the house, when suddenly he was confronted by his little factotum, Eddie.

"Halloo, my man! Where did you come from?"

"I have been playing against two Jimmies."

"And what brought you here?"

"I thought I'd run down and see what I could pick up."

"How long have you been here?"

"About a couple of hours."

"And you have been watching that house?"

"Yes."

"Seen any one enter?"

"No."

"Any one leave?"

"No."

"No one has left the house and no one has entered?"

"No."

"I reckon it is lucky you have been around. And now tell me about the Jimmies."

"Those two cops?"

"Well, what of them?"

Eddie told his story. The detective was amused, and said:

"You are a dandy, Ed."

"Thank you; and what have you picked up?"

"I have picked up a great deal, but I have not time to tell my story now. But we will wait here awhile. There may be some business for you."

"I am on hand for any business."

"I know, lad; it's all right."

The two hung around for some time, and then suddenly the door of the house they were watching opened, and the man Alvarez came forth.

"Eddie," said our hero, "you see that man?"

"I do."

"You know him?"

"He is the fellow we are on to."

"You are right. Follow him. Do not speak to him. Just learn if he goes to his house, or goes somewhere else. If he goes to his house you leave him and make for our own headquarters. If he does not go to his house stick to him and run him down."

"You can depend upon me."

"I know that, my lad; and now fire ahead."

The man Alvarez started away at a slow pace, and Eddie fell to his shadow. The detective, meantime, determined upon the burglar game.

He dodged into the basement and soon succeeded in opening the basement door. He drew his mask-lantern and looked around. Then removing his shoes and putting on a pair of moccasins, he ascended the stairs. He proceeded without molestation and gained the second floor, and stood opposite the door of the room

in which he had seen the glimmer of light from the street.

He peeped into the room. A woman sat near a table. She seemed lost in deep thought. The detective had a chance to study her face, and he knew that he was looking upon Essie Hinsdale. He saw the resemblance to the picture he carried, but, like Kelley, was able to discern the difference. A moment he stood and studied, and then muttered:

"I reckon I will interview that woman!"

It took the detective but a second to work a disguise. He drew a mask over his face—a regular burglar's half-face—and then, taking a pistol in his hand, he opened the door and boldly entered the room.

The woman leaped to her feet, and would have screamed, but the detective covered her with the muzzle of his pistol, and exclaimed:

"Do not make a noise. Do not scream, or you are a dead woman!"

"Who are you? and what do you want here?"

The woman spoke in a moderately firm voice.

"I mean no harm."

"You are a burglar?"

"You are right; but I am in the wrong house."

"Then get out!"

"I will, but not in such a hurry as you appear to desire."

"I will call the police."

"Oh, no, you will not."

"I am not alone. Assistance is at hand."

"Utter one cry and you are a dead woman. I tell you I did not mean to get into this house. I've made a mistake in the darkness. I did not calculate just right, but since I am here I will not hurry out as soon as you wish me to. But you are safe. I will not harm you, nor will I take one thing of value away from you."

"Then why do you not go?"

"Because I am surprised."

"What has surprised you?"

"To meet you here."

"What do you mean?"

"I've seen you before."

"When and where did you ever see me?"

"I will not recall to you recollection at present; but this is a great surprise. I really recognized you at the first glance."

"You never saw me. Now go, or I will summon aid."

"I warned you not to do that; I warn you again."

"You say you know me?"

"Yes."

"You are surely mistaken."

"No, I am not mistaken. But I thought you were dead. I thought you would come to some bad end."

The woman's face became deathly pale.

"You thought I would come to some bad end?"

"Yes."

"You are a madman."

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"I can convince you to the contrary."

"Do so."

"Well, how about Denver?"

Again the woman turned pale, and said:

"There! I knew you were mistaken."

"You were never in Denver?"

"Never in my life."

"And you never knew Hank Clark?"

"Never. I never heard the name."

"Well, well, how strange! But did you see last night's papers?"

"I did."

"Then are you surprised that I thought you were dead?"

The woman's face became ghastly.

"If you were never in Denver, why did you turn so pale when I mentioned the place?"

"Man, you are crazy! You are some madman let loose."

"Who is the dead woman whose body was found at the — Hotel?"

"What do I know about the woman?"

"You must know something about her."

"It is false."

"Oh, no, else way is it reported that the dead woman is Essie Hinsdale?"

"What do I know about Essie Hinsdale?"

"What do you know about Essie Hinsdale?"

"Yes; I never heard the name before."

"Then who are you?"

"It matters not to you who I am, and you had better go."

"Oh, no, I am bound to stay now."

"I tell you I will summon help."

"Do so."

The woman stared.

"You are a burglar?"

"Certainly; but I've fallen to something through a strange fatality. What's your scheme? I say you must count me in."

"You insulting wretch!"

"Oh, it won't do, Essie; I know you. I'd know you if I saw you in a dark room. I know your voice—I know the glance of your eye. Every movement of yours is a tell-tale to me. No, no, it won't do, and I am going to sit down till you tell me what your game is. Yes, yes, the dead Essie Hinsdale at the — Hotel, and I meet the live Essie under very remarkable conditions. I am in the dark, but you will let me into the scheme—certainly you will. Come, Essie, talk up."

The woman was breathless with amazement and terror, and she again exclaimed:

"Man, you are mad!"

"Then send for the police. I will not shout. Yes, if you can stand the coming of a cop, I can. Why, Essie, it's immense! I was way down in luck, but I am on to it now. Yes, this is a placer—a rich one. Come, talk up, sis. What does it mean?"

The woman meditated a moment, and then said:

"If you will let me see your face I will talk up."

"You promise?"

"I do."

"You will talk right up square?"

"I will."

"You promise fair and square?"

"I do."

"And let me in to this scheme?"

"Yes."

"Well, sis, I can't show you my face to night. I've too good a thing on you; yes, I have. Well, well! to think Essie Hinsdale's dead at the — Hotel and there she is, dead to all the world but me. I am into this scheme, or I am singing out the tenor, you bet! Come, come, Essie, talk up or call the police. I don't fear the police while I am in your company. I've too good a tale to tell. Talk up, Essie—talk up. I am bound to be in this scheme."

CHAPTER XI.

The woman glared. She was a handsome creature, and, as intimated, her eyes blazed.

"You are a fraud!" she said.

"Ah, don't call names; it doesn't sound pretty. Come, come, talk up!"

"Man, is it possible I resemble some one you once knew?"

"Yes, that is possible," said the disguised detective, in a very peculiar and significant tone.

The woman shuddered.

"Will you let me see your face?"

"No, no; it's too good, Essie. I can not sacrifice my advantage. Great Scott! but I was way down, but I've struck it good, eh? Yes, I have. Just to think, eh? Essie Hinsdale dead at the — Hotel, eh? Died by her own hand, and here she is, and I am talking to her ghost, eh? Well, this does go, Essie. Who is the woman who died in the — Hotel—a twin sister? I never knew you had a sister. And, by George! here you are with lots of stuff, eh? All in this house belongs to you, eh? Well, you have struck it good, but I am in with you. Yes, yes, you will take me in, old gal, or I squeak, and don't you forget it!"

A dozen varying expressions passed over the woman's face.

"You devil!" she exclaimed.

"Good enough. I am a devil."

"See here, man; if you will let me see your face I will own up. Come, come; you can not expect me to let a dead stranger into my game."

"But you are a dead woman, Essie. Why not let a dead man into the game?"

"Why will you persist in calling me Essie Hinsdale?"

"That's so. As Essie Hinsdale is dead I should not call a living woman Essie Hinsdale. But I am on to it, Essie. Yes, you are not Essie Hinsdale, but her ghost. I am talking to a ghost. I am going to take a drink with a ghost."

"You shall have a drink; and then will you go?"

"Mebbe I will."

"You shall have a drink."

"Good enough. Get out your bottle."

The woman rose and went to a cupboard closet in the room. She took down a bottle.

She placed the bottle, corked, upon the table. She placed glasses on the table and said:

"Help yourself."

The man drew the cork. He poured out some of the brown liquid in a glass, and then he looked up.

"Well, Essie," he said, "this is immense! What a privileged character I am, to be sure! Here the whole city of New York is studying over the mystery of the death, by suicide or murder, of Essie Hinsdale, and here I am taking a little sociable drink with her ghost. Come, Essie, join me."

"I do not drink."

"Well, well; but you will drink with me?"

"Not one drop. You asked for a drink and I gave it to you."

"Well, well! to drink with a ghost, and at midnight, too! Well, this is better than a play. It beats a tragedy all hollow. Yes, it does. But, Essie, I can not drink alone. I never do."

At that moment the detective gave a sudden start. Something pressed against his legs. He looked down. It was a Maltese cat.

"Halloo, pussy!" he said; "you have come just in time. Poor pussy! poor pussy!"

The detective spoke in a very strange and weird tone. He took up the glass and raised it to his lips, and that instant the cat purred, and he looked on the face of the woman. He saw a terrible gleam in her eyes; a chill went through his heart; but he had been on his guard all the time.

He put down the glass, and asked:

"What is the matter with you, Essie?"

"Nothing, only I am excited."

"You are excited?"

"Yes. Is it not enough to excite a lady to have a russsian force himself into her room at midnight and insult her?"

"Have I insulted you, Essie?"

"You have."

"Oh, no, I could not insult you. But it is not excitement in your face; it is eagerness."

"Why should I be eager?"

"Well, I have a suspicion—yes, Essie; but it is strange you are dead. Yes, you are a ghost, and you want to make a ghost of me, eh? That's the reason you are so eager."

The woman's face became ghastly.

"What do you mean?"

"I will show you, Essie. Ah, you cruel, cruel love!"

The detective seized the cat. He held it by the throat. The poor animal opened its mouth, and quick as lightning the detective poured some of the liquor down the poor beast's throat; the poor cat was compelled to swallow. The adept detective had held her so she could not do otherwise. The woman gazed agast. She indeed did look like a ghost. Our hero laid the writhing cat on the table. The poor animal just writhed. It was a horrible sight. It began to froth at the lips, its eyes gleamed with a terrible brightness, and the detective said:

"Poor kitty! it has a fit."

There was a terrible meaning in his tones and in his glance as he glared at the woman, who sat like one frozen to death. A moment and the cat stiffened out in death, and the detective said:

"Poor kitty!"

The woman sat as though frozen into stone. It was a tragic tableau presented at that moment, and the detective repeated:

"Poor kitty! But better you than me."

This our hero spoke in a strange, weird tone. He poured out a second glass of whisky, and in a terrible voice, and with fiercely burning eyes, he said:

"Essie, drink, or I will be compelled to believe you meant that poor kitty's fate for me!"

"Man, you are a monster, a fiend!"

"And what are you? Are you really a ghost? and did you learn this trick in hell? and did you come back to earth to practice it on me?"

"You're a fool!"

"A fiend and a fool, eh? Well, I didn't drink the liquor."

"The liquor would have been harmless to you."

"It would?"

"Yes; cats can not stand liquor. It was the liquor killed poor kitty."

"Yes; it was the liquor killed poor kitty, and it would have killed me had I been trustful enough to have drunk it; otherwise prove to me it was harmless. Come, here is more from the same bottle."

"I'll not drink—I never drink."

"Oh, you never drink?"

"Never."

"It's well I didn't, eh? Oh, yes, one thing is certain, you will never drink from that bottle unless you intend that Essie Hinsdale shall be dead indeed. So now come, woman, I've got it dead on you."

The detective raised the body of the cat and tossed it in a pantry-way between the front and rear rooms. Having disposed of the dead cat, Al resumed his seat opposite the woman, and said:

"You will not drink? It might be better if you did. But come, open up."

"I have nothing to open up, monster."

"What does it mean that your dead body was found in a room in the — Hotel?"

"My name is not Essie Hinsdale."

"You are not Essie Hinsdale?"

"I am not."

"It's strange."

"It is not strange. I know what all this means."

"But what does all this mean?"

"It means that there lived a vile woman named Essie Hinsdale; the woman contemplated a great wrong against me; she became conscience-sticken and has taken her life."

"And this woman bore a fatal resemblance to you?"

"Yes."

"The woman who committed suicide in the — Hotel?"

"Yes."

"Did you see the body?"

"Yes. Curiosity led me to go and see her body. I never saw her in life. I did see her after her death."

"And you noted the resemblance?"

"I did. It was wonderfully striking."

"I saw that body, Essie."

"You did?"

"I did—yes. When I saw that Essie Hinsdale was dead, I went to see the body. I had known Essie. I saw the body. It was not the body of Essie Hinsdale. You are Essie Hinsdale."

"It's false, man. I must know who you are!"

"If you are not Essie Hinsdale what difference does it make to you who I am?"

"It is you who meditates a scheme. Fool! I see all now. You are not here by mistake. You are not a common burglar. You are here by design. You're acting a part."

"If you are not Essie Hinsdale, who are you?"

"You know well enough who I am."

"You are right. I do know who you are. I know well you are Essie Hinsdale. And now I ask you who is the dead woman? Did she commit suicide, or was she was murdered as a part of your scheme?"

"You villain! I am a woman at your mercy. You have penetrated my apartments after midnight. All I can do is wait, and you shall answer for all this."

"I shall!"

"Yes, and in the presence of the proper persons. When I am under proper protection I will answer your question as to who I am."

"And who is your protector?"

"A gentleman whose identity will not be disclosed."

"And who is the gentleman?"

"The executor of my brother's will."

The detective laughed outright, and said:

"Well, this is good."

"You will learn the truth to your sorrow, and some day I will know who you are."

"No doubt you will, Essie, and you will be heart-broken when you do learn who I am."

"You are a mean villain, I know that."

"Come, come, Essie. What is the use? Who was the woman who was murdered at the — Hotel?"

The woman suddenly reached across the table and tore aside the detective's mask, and she gazed in blank astonishment.

CHAPTER XII.

AL STETSON was well entitled to bear the name of Old Phenomenal, for he was a phenomenal man. He had anticipated the woman's movement—indeed, he had courted it; and when he walked over to throw the cat between the two rooms he had deftly run his hand under his mask and had marked his face in the most ludicrous manner with the aid of a few pieces of blue and red paint. He had done it purposely, and when the woman beheld his painted face she indeed gazed in amazement.

"Well, Essie, do you know me? Do you know your old Warm Springs Indian friend?"

"Man, you are a fiend!"

"I do look like one; but mark my words: you are going to take me into this scheme."

"There is no scheme to take you into. You are a devil. I am not Essie Hinsdale. You are already in some scheme against me, but you will be brought to bay, you and the man or men who are engaged with you. I do not fear you, and I tell you that you have not scared me. I will not be robbed, and I will force you and your aiders and abettors to a full and complete confession."

"You will?"

"I will."

"Well, good-night, Essie. I got in here by mistake, but I am glad I came. Good-night. I said I would not take anything away from you. I will keep my word, and I will let my little job go by for the night. I've fallen by accident into something far better. Dear Essie, good-night; your Indian friend goes."

The moment the detective departed, the woman whom the detective had called Essie Hinsdale began to pace the floor. She was in a very excited condition. She looked at the little ormolu clock upon the mantel. It was just one half hour beyond midnight, and she cried:

"I can not stand it—I can not stand it! I must see him—I must see him!"

She was still pacing the room, when there came the sound of a step in the hall. She ran there and beheld a young man.

"Is that you, Alfred?"

"Yes."

"Go at once and find Isidor, and send him to me. I must see him to-night at all hazards."

The young man started off, and the woman continued to pace the floor, and she kept up her walk for an hour, when a man entered the house. The man was disguised, but she ran to him and called him Isidor, and exclaimed:

"Oh, Isidor, we are in great peril!"

"Nonsense, woman! You are always sending for me, and you are always in great peril. Tell me your story."

The woman related all that had occurred. The man listened very attentively, and there were flashes of anger crossing his face. When the woman had concluded, he said:

"You said that man came in here immediately after my departure?"

"Yes."

"Was it that fellow Kalley?"

"No."

"How do you know?"

"The man was larger than Kalley. Kalley has jet-black eyes; this man's eyes were gray."

The man meditated a moment, then said:

"Kalley is at the bottom of all this."

"He is."

"We have nothing to fear. We can soon settle the whole business."

"How?"

"This man Kalley is young and fresh."

"The man who was here to terrify me was not young and fresh. This man is one of the most terrible men I ever met. You know I have plenty of courage and nerve; you know I do not scare easily; but I tell you this man by his very presence made my blood run cold."

"It will be all right."

"What will you do?"

"Set a trap."

"I do not understand."

"We will get rid of this man Kalley. He escaped me once; he will not escape me again."

"But the man who visited me?"

"He will be powerless after Kalley is out of the way."

"Kalley may have explained many things to him."

"Bah! we have the whole matter in our hands. We are in possession. We have committed no crime that can be reached, unless George Heath should return from the grave."

"But Adele?"

"You are Adele."

"Ah, but you know what I mean."

The man commenced to pace the floor.

"That is the awkward part of it," he said.

"Yes, it is the awkward part."

"It is strange what became of that girl. I believe she is dead."

"I do not."

"She will never appear. If she does she is an impostor. Every passing day is so much in our favor."

"But Kalley? Suppose he is in communication with the girl?"

"If he is, we will find her all the same."

"I think not. We had better be careful what we do."

"In what direction?"

"You said we had committed no crime."

"Well?"

"If you kill Kalley we will commit a crime, and the terrible man on our trail will track us down."

"Essie, you do not understand my methods."

"Oh, do not call me Essie; it makes me shudder; it makes me feel as though I were lying dead in that hotel."

The man laughed, and said:

"I will call you Adele."

"You say I do not understand your methods?"

"Yes."

"Well, what are your methods?"

"Don't you see I had a point in having Essie Hinsdale murdered?"

"I can not see."

"I intended to lay for two points; one point has failed; I will now work the other. I had a great scheme; I will not murder Kalley."

"Then how will you get rid of him?"

"I will hang him. That is my scheme; and as the man spoke he laughed in a sardonic manner.

"How can you?"

"Well, you are not as bright as usual, but I will hang him for the murder of Essie Hinsdale. That will prove Essie's death; it will get rid of Kalley, and we are all right, with none to dispute our sway."

"It would be all right if things would carry."

"They will carry. I have played one of the greatest games ever conceived by mortal man. I have played all my cards in a masterly manner."

"There is one thing you forget."

"What?"

"The man who was here to intimidate me tonight."

"Bah! I do not mind him."

"He has the points on me. He will swear to my identity."

"Will he?"

"He will, most surely."

Again the man laughed, and said:

"You do not know how well I have arranged my plans. I can swear that man down."

"Suppose they produce the real Adele?"

"Let them. I am prepared for that. Do you not know that a man who is a suspected murderer will be suspected on every hand? His testimony and the testimony of his friends will not avail. There is one thing you forget, clearly."

"And what is that?"

"My character. I can bring proof of an un-sullied character. As a witness, no man can stand better than I, and what will the words of an assassin be against me and the witnesses I will bring?"

"It does seem as though your scheme would work well."

"You can trust me."

"When will you open up?"

"I can touch the button at any moment. All is working well. I have piped in every direction. I have wired every point."

"It certainly is grandly arranged."

"It is."

"But the best laid plans may fail."

"My plans can not fail."

"It would all be well if it were not for the man who was here."

"That man appears to have frightened the life out of you."

"He has. I have a suspicion."

"Well, what is your suspicion?"

"That man, I fear, is a detective."

"I do not care. So much the better. I will bend him to our game."

"Never!"

"Why not?"

"He is a man who can not be fooled. Oh, how I shudder when I remember his voice—his cool manner! If you had seen him."

"Seen him do what?"

"Poison that cat."

"That is the only bad incident, Adele. But we can fix that."

"How?"

"Deny it. No one saw the deed."

"I thought I would get rid of him. I knew we were in danger."

"You need not have attempted it. My schemes were all right. We need not take a life. All will rest with the man Kalley, and he is sure to hang. Nothing can save the man."

"It looks rosy."

"It is rosy."
"You have not met that man yet?"
"I will meet him."
"And I fear—"
"What?"
"You will realize whom you have to play against."
"Do you suspect his real identity?"
"Within a few moments a suspicion has come to my mind."
"Well?"
"There was a man on Hank Clark's track once."
"Well?"
"He was a terrible man."
"And his identity?"
"We could never discover. He hung Clark, all the same."
"Then we need not fear Clark."
"But the man who hung Clark knows all about me."
"Bah! that does not count. He is but a man."
"I am glad you are so confident."
"I am; and now you rest easy. We will put up a scheme to catch the man who was here."
"He will come again?"
"Sure; and I will be on hand for him."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE man Isidor remained and arranged certain plans with the woman, and when it was all concluded, she said:

"Will we ever know peace again?"

The man laughed, and said:

"I am perfectly happy now."

"Yes; but in one direction where you are assured I am in doubt."

Again the man laughed in a sardonic manner, and said:

"Favor your doubt. Leave all to me. I will assume the whole responsibility. There is no doubt in my mind."

"Then it is arranged that I will communicate with you?"

"Yes, I will have my watcher on hand every minute. I will hold myself in constant readiness for a summons. I do this in deference to your fears alone. Good-night."

The man after a few moments departed. He passed down the stairs. He went from the house, and was triumphant and happy. He did not know—he did not dream, that his whole scheme had been opened up to the keenest pair of ears that ever adorned a head.

As the man passed the house and walked up the street, a little figure started after him, and that little figure had come from the same house.

When Al Stetson left the presence of the woman, he went straight to his lodgings. He had done a good night's work. He was desirous of learning what little Eddie had done.

It was nearly four o'clock in the morning when Eddie showed up. The great detective awaited him.

"Well, Ed, what have you picked up?"

"Give me time; my head is full."

"Take your time, my little dandy."

"Uncle Al, when I came to you, down in Nashville, I told you that you would never regret taking me into your service."

"I never have, my lad. You are not going to discharge yourself?"

"No, sir; but I've done a big stroke tonight."

"You have?"

"I have. Yes, I've got on to the whole scheme, and, as the woman said, if it had not been for one thing, nothing could prevent its success."

"And what is the one thing?"

"You visited that woman to night?"

"I did."

"You killed a cat?"

"I did."

"That's the incident that bothers the woman Essie."

"You are on to her name?"

"Yes."

"How did you get it?"

"Thereby hangs a tale."

"Let's hear your story."

"Good enough. It will take time. You said I could take all the time I needed."

"Take your time, Eddie; tell me to-morrow. I'll turn in."

"Good-night," said Ed. "I'll have a chance to arrange my notes."

"Come, come; no more of this."

"You want me to talk up?"

"I do."

"I am on to a big thing."
"Let's have it."
"You set me to follow that man?"
"I did."
"His name is Isidor."
"Ah! I thought so."
"Yes. It's the same man who had the talk with Baily."
"Yes."
"The man who gave the regular his points."
"Yes."
"Did it ever strike you what his game was in doing that?"
"No; not fully."
"I am on to it—yes, on to it in full."
"Go ahead."
"Some one is to hang."
Al Stetson looked deeply interested, and he exclaimed:
"By gosh! I am on to it now."
"You know who is to hang?"
"Yes."
"Then that fits the last link to the chain. We've got the whole business."
"Go on with your narrative."
"I fell to that man's shadow."
"Yes."
"He went to the tiger den."
"Yes."
"He stayed there a little while, and then started for his home. He went straight to his house. He was entering the door when a man came running toward him. The two held a few minutes' conversation, and then Isidor walked off at a rapid pace."

The lad stopped.
"Go on."

"What do you suppose I did? I shadowed him, and struck his big game."

"Eddie, you are a brick."

"I begin to think so, Uncle Al. Anyhow, I am in great luck."

"Let's hear your narrative."

The lad started in and related every word that had passed between the man and the woman. His powers of memory were simply marvelous. He was one of the most extraordinary of lads; and here let us say that in these days there are hundreds of just such smart lads as we describe. The only advantage Eddie had was, as stated, his training under a great master. He related the conversation, word for word, and among other things described the plan that had been arranged for an interview between the detective and the man Isidor. When the lad's narrative was concluded, the great detective said:

"Ed, you have accomplished a wonderful feat."

"I've got on to the game, anyhow."
"You have; and within twenty hours that fellow Isidor will have a chance to meet me. And now, my lad, to-morrow you must get around and lay on that man's track."

"I'll be there."

"He will probably have another interview with Baily."

"Sure."

"Those fellows are on to you."

"A little bit. But I will fool 'em."

"How?"

"They will look for the boy."

"Yes."

"I'll be a girl."

Al Stetson laughed, and said:

"That may work just once."

"Once will do for me."

Again the detective laughed, and Eddie added:

"You can trust me. Even if they do get on to me they can't hold me."

"Then to-morrow you will work that man?"

"Yes."

"If you are on to him you will follow him when he comes to catch me."

"I will, sure."

"Then we can communicate?"

"We can."

"Then good-night, little wonder."

It was late on the following day when our hero stepped forth. Eddie had got out earlier. Al Stetson went direct to the house where he expected to find the man Edward Kalley. He had arranged so he could visit the man's house and on proper signals be admitted. He found his man awaiting him.

"I expected you."

"And I am here."

"You went to that house?"

"I did."

"You saw the woman?"

"I did, and, what is more, I recognized her."

"That is good. You recognized her as Essie Hinsdale?"

"No; I met her under another name; but it is just as good. I've got her and her pedigree down fine."

"Then our road is clear."

"You think so?"

"Yes."

"What would you do?"

"Denounce them at once."

"That might be a good scheme under some circumstances, but not at present."

"Why not?"

"You do not know their scheme."

"Do you?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well?"

"It is a great one."

"We can beat it."

"You are in peril."

"I am in peril?"

"You are."

"How?"

"You are liable to arrest at any moment."

"Ah! I can meet that."

"I don't know about that."

"I can."

"You were at the —— Hotel the night the woman was murdered."

The man Kalley looked at our hero in a puzzled manner, and asked:

"Do you think I was there?"

"I know you were there."

"I was not."

"You swear it?"

"I do."

"And yet they can prove by a dozen men that you were there."

"How can they prove it when I know I was not there?"

"They can."

"What are you giving me? What are you after?"

"What I say is the truth."

"They can prove I was at that hotel?"

"Yes."

"But I was not."

"I do not believe you were. I know you were not."

"Then how can they prove I was there?"

"Can't you see how?"

"I can not."

The detective was thoughtful a moment, and then said:

"They had a dummy rigged up for you."

CHAPTER XIV.

EDWARD KALLEY stared, and said:

"What could have been their purpose?"

"Their purpose is plain. They have played a great game."

"And what is their purpose?"

"You will be arrested for the murder of Essie Hinsdale. The plot has been to make it appear as a murder. They have arranged their plans to make it appear that you are the murderer, and they have done it well."

"How did you learn all these facts?"

"I have a way of finding out facts."

"But no such conspiracy could succeed."

"How little you know! You are playing against a very shrewd man. I could not see how they intended to utilize the supposed murderer of the girl at the hotel. But now it is all plain as day."

"Do you only surmise this, or have you the proof?"

"I have the most positive proof of their scheme."

"It could not succeed."

"Had it not been for discoveries that I have made, nothing could have prevented its success."

"I can not see how."

"This man Alvarez bears a most excellent character. He has worked plans to make witnesses—they are reputable witnesses—together with others who will swear to the most positive facts. I tell you it is a great game."

"I do not fear."

"You need not now. But you are liable to arrest, all the same; or you must become a fugitive. If you run away they will surely run you down, and the fact of your having run away will militate against you. Indeed, I believe it is a part of his scheme to have you become a fugitive, as confirmatory evidence. He has played his cards well, and I am the only man living who has it in his power to beat his game."

There came a strange look in the eyes of Ed-

ward Kalley. Our hero interpreted the look, and said:

"If you think I am exaggerating my position in the matter, you are mistaken. I have obtained other evidence."

"Well?"

"I know that Adele Heath still lives."

"Is she in their custody?"

"No."

"Where is she?"

"They do not know."

"And how about her brother?"

"I have no proof, but I have reason to believe that he also is alive."

"That is what I have suspected all along."

"As I said, you are liable to arrest for murder."

"What nonsense! Essie Hinsdale is not dead."

"That is true."

"Then how can I be accused of her murder?"

"They will prove that she is dead. They will prove that Adele Heath is alive. Adele Heath will testify against you."

"What does all this mean? Are you in the scheme with them?"

"That is a mean query, but I will answer you. If I were in the scheme, why do I come to you and expose their plans?"

"But your statements are so amazing."

"I know it. But they are playing a great game. Now let's go over the ground. This woman Essie Hinsdale will come into court and swear that she is Adele Heath."

"And I will swear that she is not."

"Then you will be asked as to your intimacy with Adele Heath. You will say you saw her once in the street with her brother, and against you eight or ten reputable witnesses, who have been purposely deceived, will come forward and swear that this woman is Adele Heath, that they knew her intimately. Cases in court on identity are decided by the preponderance of evidence. They will swear you down, ten to one. You saw the girl once on the street. They will swear they have known her intimately for years."

"I did not think of all this."

"No, you did not. Fortunately, I came in at the proper time, and will upset them. Had I not come into the case nothing would have saved you, and you would have been hung for murder as sure as you sit there at this moment."

"But they would have to prove a motive."

"They have arranged for that."

"How?"

"They will make the charge of conspiracy against you—conspiracy and blackmail."

"There is my previous character."

"Which will not weigh against the terrible array of evidence that will be produced."

"That is all very embarrassing."

"It is. I do not see but you will be arrested. I should not be surprised if regular officers were already on your track. I tell you the game is a great one. The mine of evidence they have arranged is certainly very ingenious."

"What would you propose?"

"For the present you must avoid arrest."

"Then I had better flee away and leave the whole matter to you."

"For the present you had better remain here. I do not know whether or not they are on to your present whereabouts. It is a great game we must play."

"It is."

"They are in possession. This man Alvarez, as executor, has all the advantage. We can explain your innocence, but that does not recover the property. It does not convict the real conspirators. We have a great game to play."

"But if you do prove the conspiracy against me?"

"I might do that, and yet fail at present to convict them. As the real conspirators, they are well fortified."

"It looks bad."

"Oh, no; it is only a question of time. I always get there in the end. But do you not see this man is the executor, as I said? He holds the property. We can only hurt them by finding the real heiress, or, better, the real owner."

"I begin to see through your plans."

"I might prove your innocence, but they may prove that the real Essie Hinsdale is Adele Heath. That once proved in the courts, if we showed the real Adele, they would have all the advantage."

"That is so."

"I have greater hopes. I expect to run down

George Heath as a living man, and then we have got them."

"I begin to realize that you are a wonderful man."

"I am aided by a greater wonder."

"In what form?"

"I will introduce you to my wonder some day; but not now."

"And you think George Heath lives?"

"I do."

"And where can he be?"

"I think this schemer Alvarez has put up a great game all through. He is certainly a very smart man. He has deceived very good people whom he can have as witnesses. We can only prove that George Heath is living by producing him."

"And his sister, what of her?"

"I'm on to the possible facts there."

"What are they?"

"These people evidently had her in their possession, and she has escaped. They do not know where she is themselves."

"I do wish you would tell me how you obtained all this information."

"By detective strategy. I have been through some very startling scenes. Ere to-morrow morning I will go through some more startling scenes; but I am forging ahead all the time, and I will reach to the bottom of this whole mystery."

"Do you suspect the identity of the woman at the hotel?"

"No."

"How will they make it appear that I was the murderer?"

"I will let you into the scheme: They secured a dead body somehow."

"How could they?"

"There are a dozen ways. This man Alvarez is a doctor."

"I see."

"Some poor girl may have committed suicide. The fact may have suggested the whole scheme to him. And now I will tell you the facts: On the night the girl registered at the hotel, a little later a young man registered also. He had a regular showman's trunk. In that trunk could have been concealed the body of a dead woman. This young man took rooms adjoining the girl's room."

"I see."

"Well, he had the body. The live girl was smuggled from the room and the dead girl's body placed there."

"Yes, I see. Oh, what a scheme!"

"These are the real facts."

"You know them to be the facts?"

"Yes, to a certain extent, and beyond that I am dependent upon conjecture; but I will bet my life on the truth of my conjecture. It is a scheme that could easily be worked by cool-headed people."

"Who was the live girl?"

"The real Essie Hinsdale."

"And who was the young man?"

"Ah, there's the rub! But one thing is certain."

"What is certain?"

"They will prove who the young man was."

Edward Kalley turned pale.

"And they will prove I was the young man?"

"Yes; and there are reputable witnesses who will positively swear to your identity, and all have proof in abundance to establish the young man's connection with the case; and those proofs are in the hands of regular detectives, men who believe them to be real indices."

"How did they get that big trunk away?"

"Easily enough. In sections; it was made for the purpose."

"Indeed they have played a great game."

"Indeed they have, and, as I said, if I had not come into the case they would have hung you."

"But you are on to it!"

"I am, from beginning to end; but I must obtain evidence in order to prove what I know."

"Can you?"

"I can and will."

The detective held some further conversation with Kalley, and then departed, saying he would call later and arrange as to his plans as against an arrest for murder.

While the incidents we have narrated were in progress, Tom Baily, and Mattie, his pard, were greatly exercised. The two men were really quite bright fellows, and yet, for the first time in their lives, they had been beaten at every point.

As is known, the body of the dead girl had been taken to the morgue. The excitement following the first discovery of the body had somewhat lessened. The case had come to be known as the — Hotel Mystery, and occasionally an article would appear in the papers announcing this and that, as is customary, and as has occurred a thousand times.

At the time our hero was holding his colloquy with the young man Kalley, Tom Baily and his pard Mattie were also holding a colloquy.

"It seems to have come to a dead stand on us, Mattie."

"It does seem so."

"I had a talk with the chief this morning."

"Well, what does he say?"

"He intimated he might take it out of our hands, and go to work on it himself."

"How far have you reported?"

"Almost everything except our discomfitures."

"There is some very smart man playing against us."

"There is."

"I can't see what has become of the old man who was in the room at the time the first investigation was made."

"Can it be possible that the man who gave you the points and the old man are one and the same, after all?"

"The one man gave me the points, put me on the evidence, and then the other man closed in on me and secured the evidence."

"What can be the man's game who first gave you the points?"

"He is seeking to drop some one."

"And the man who beat you?"

"He is seeking to shield some one."

"Then you feel certain there has been a murder?"

"I am as certain as I am that I am speaking to you at this moment."

"Then one represents the murderer?"

"Yes."

"And the other?"

"The devil knows."

"The man told you to inquire about the young man with the big trunk?"

"Yes."

"He did not give you any name?"

"No."

"Nor did you get on to any clew whereby you might trace him?"

"No."

"It's bad. What part does that smart lad play in the case?"

"He plays a big part. That lad is a little imp."

"He was too much for us, however."

"He was that, dead sure."

"We may get on to him again."

"We may."

"When we do we will hold him."

"As long as we can, with one hope."

"And that is?"

"He will draw out the man who is behind."

"In the meantime we must find the man who gave you the points."

"That should be our objective point."

"We will go and lay around for him."

"I am in with you. We will try it. But how can we find him?"

"It all depends, of course, upon our finding him."

"Let's start right in."

The two detectives went to the hotel where Tom had first met the man. They hung around for hours, and were about ready to give it up. Indeed, Mattie said:

"I reckon he will not show up to day."

"So it appears."

"I wish we could run across that boy."

"So do I, Mattie."

"We have no clew at all on the old man."

"You mean the fellow who was under cover?"

"Yes."

"Tom, I tell you I think they are one and the same."

"There is no connection between those two men. I tell you they are playing against each other."

"Are you sure you would know him?"

"Yes, I am; and there he is, old man!"

CHAPTER XV.

As the detective spoke a man entered the bar-room. He did not look at all like the man whom Tom Baily had met; but the detective was on to him.

"Yes," he said, in a low tone to Mattie, "there he is."

"You are sure?"

"Dead sure; and you skip if you mean to work your scheme."

Mattie glided away, and Tom lay around. The detective was under a complete transform. He intended to take his man at a disadvantage.

As stated, Baily laid around and watched his man. He soon fell to the fact that the man he was watching was also on the lay for some one.

"I reckon," muttered Tom, "I'll just keep my eye on him. I may get something good."

The man went to the bar, and drank a ginger ale. He then stepped over to the reading-room and sat down. Baily felt well assured of his disguises, and in good time slid into a seat near his man.

A half hour passed, when another man entered the room. He glanced around in every direction until his eyes fell upon the man Baily was watching. He cautiously approached, and an instant later the two men exchanged signals. Then the man number two sat down beside number one, the fellow the detective had been shadowing, and Baily was near enough to overhear what had passed.

"Well, Kalley, have you got on to him yet?"

"No."

"We will find him."

"But we are losing time."

"Can't help it."

"There is a new man in the case."

"Who is he?"

"I've not seen him yet, but he is a terror, so I hear."

"Who met him?"

"Well, some one met him."

"Is he in with our man K---?"

"He must be."

"Theu it is necessary for you to act quickly."

"It is; but how can I?"

"Give his name and identity, and let the regulars find him."

"That won't do."

"Why not?"

"I might spring the trap too soon. I would like to interview the fellow just once."

"What can you make by that?"

"Well, old man, I can't tell you just now."

"I thought you had given me your full confidence?"

"I have; but this is only a matter of speculation. I'd like to find out who the new man is before I give him dead away; and, besides, he may know something that will settle the case forever. He may save his own life yet. I may never give him away. The quietest way to deal is the best, if it will work."

"I agree with you there; but you may be taking big chances."

"I will give you a day longer."

"All right; I may make out something. I've three men on the chase."

"Put on twenty if necessary. Don't spare any expense."

"That's all right; but if we can accomplish it with three, it's better than having ten."

"I admit that. When will you meet me again?"

"To-morrow."

"At what hour?"

"This is a good time of the clock."

"I will be here. You go."

The man went away, and the man whom our detective had been watching kept his seat. Tom Baily lay around a few moments and then went over and took the seat Kalley had vacated.

"Well, old man, I am here," he said.

"Who are you?"

"You don't remember me?"

"No."

"It's strange."

"It's stranger that you should address me, for I've never seen you before in my life."

"Well, I will say myself it is strange that I should recognize you, because you are now under cover."

Both men had spoken in very low tones.

"Look out, my friend. You've either made a mistake, or you are playing some game. Either way I don't like it."

"Who are you?"

"Baily is my name."

"I am glad to meet you."

"And I am glad to meet you. We were to meet before."

"If I had met you I would only have been compelled to ask a postponement."

"A postponement?"

"Yes."

"Of what?"

"I promised you certain information."

"You did."

"I am not prepared at present to give you that information."

"Why not?"

"I haven't obtained it myself."

Tom Baily had overheard the conversation between the man and his friend Kalley, and he said:

"I may aid you if you confide in me."

"I can not confide in you at present."

"I've an idea."

"Well?"

"I should do my duty."

"What is it your duty to do?"

"I believe I should arrest you."

At this moment Mattie approached and signaled his pal. The latter indicated, and Baily then said:

"Come, my friend, I want you to open up."

"I've nothing to say. I will meet you in a few days, and then I may have a most thrilling and startling revelation to make."

"That is very indefinite."

"I can do no better. My actions will depend upon certain events that may occur."

"Will you meet me to-morrow?"

"No. I will not name a special day. You can be here, and if I see fit to meet you, all right. And now, sir, I will bid you good-day."

Baily did not attempt to interfere with the man's departure. He had indicated, and he proposed to await events.

The man who would give no name left the hotel and proceeded to the street. He walked along slowly and turned off Broadway, and was going down a side street when two men suddenly stepped forward. One of them laid his hands on the shoulder of the man who had been talking with Baily, and said:

"You are my prisoner!"

The man drew himself up, and demanded:

"On what charge?"

"You will learn the charge later on. You will go with me."

"Hold! you make a mistake."

"I reckon I know what I am about. Will you go quietly, or shall I put the darbies on you?"

"No need for that. I will call assistance; I will appeal to the police."

Both men drew back the lapels of their coats and displayed their badges.

"You need not call for an officer; we are policemen."

"You may be officers, but you will sweat for this outrage on a well-known citizen."

The two officers led their prisoner to the same house into which Eddie had been taken, and cross-examined him. Once in the house, Mattie said:

"Now, sir, it remains with you to explain yourself, or be formally charged."

"Charged with what?"

"Murder."

"Who makes the charge?"

"It does not matter; we have been on your track; we have discovered enough to warrant an arrest."

"Who am I charged with murdering?"

"The woman whose body was found in the — Hotel."

The man turned pale, and Mattie said:

"If you can give satisfactory explanations of your connection with that affair, you can go free; otherwise we will lock you up under formal charges. We have brought you here to give you a chance."

"On what grounds do you suspect me?"

"You have given information which establishes your connection with the case. You have not given any explanations. We have concluded that you were seeking to throw us off the track. We believe you know all about the murder."

"I do, and I am as innocent as you are."

"You can make what explanations you please, and, if satisfactory, we will release you."

"I shall not make any explanations at present. I do not fear arrest."

"Then we shall be compelled to hold you."

"That matter rests with yourself."

"I will assume and meet all responsibility."

Mattie left the room for a few moments. He met Baily outside, and he told him what had occurred, and asked:

"What shall we do?"

"We will take the chance, and hold the man for a few days."

"We run a risk."

"We must take a risk. We are justified in keeping him as a prisoner."

"Then we shall hold him?"

"At least for a few hours, and then I will have a talk with him."

"Very well. We do as you direct."

Mattie returned to the room. He slipped the darbies on his prisoner, and said:

"We will hold you while we consult with the chief."

"You had better take me before your chief."

"You say you want to talk with the chief?"

"No. I demand my freedom, and I will hold you responsible for this outrage."

"Very well; we will hold you."

"And you will regret it."

Mattie gave some directions to his partner, who had remained a silent witness and listener, and then he left the room. With the handcuffs upon his wrists, the man who had been made prisoner sat silent. And thus fully fifteen minutes passed, when a most strange, startling, and unexpected incident occurred.

CHAPTER XVI.

As stated at the close of our preceding chapter, Mattie left his prisoner securely handcuffed, under the care of a comrade. The man in charge of the prisoner sat in a dreamy sort of manner. Suddenly, however, he fell from his chair. He had been struck a powerful blow from behind. He fell over insensible, and a lad advanced toward the spot where the prisoner sat. The latter had seen the boy enter the room on tiptoe, had seen him steal toward the guard. He had sat spell-bound, and did not realize what was about to occur until he saw the blow struck; then he would have made an outcry, but the lad put his fingers to his lips in a warning manner and stole across the room. He got close to the prisoner, and in a low tone asked:

"Do you want to get away from here?"

"Who are you?" demanded the prisoner.

"We have no time to talk now; my question is plain."

"Yes, I want to get away."

"That's all right. Will you follow me?"

"I will."

"We must move quick."

The lad advanced, and by a wonderful trick removed the handcuffs. He then led the way out of the room. He walked down to the basement and so out to the rear yard of the house. He scaled the fence, followed by the late prisoner, went through an alley-way, and gained the street opposite to the one on which the house faced from which he had escaped, and then he turned and said:

"Here we are!"

"I owe my freedom to you."

"That's all right."

"You had some reason in freeing me?"

"Yes, I do not like the fellows who made you a prisoner. I did it to balk them."

"Who are those men?"

"You know the man you were chinning with at the hotel?"

"Baily?"

"Yes."

"I know him."

"Those other two men are his pals."

"And you rescued me to spite them?"

"Yes."

"Tell me their purpose in holding me, and I will give you ten dollars."

The lad laughed, and said:

"I am a millionaire now. I do not need money. I'll tell you why they arrested you, all the same. They want to hang you."

"For what?"

"Murder, of course."

"Whose murder?"

"The murder of the woman who was found dead in the — Hotel."

"Boy, you know a great deal."

"I do, that's certain."

"Why do they connect me with the murderer?"

Eddie, like all detectives—and he was a detective, although but seventeen—enjoyed his little surprises, and he said:

"You connected yourself with it."

"How?"

"You sent for Baily; you put him on to a trail."

The man started and gazed in amazement.

"Great guns! how do you chance to know all this?"

"Oh, I know a great deal."

"And they connect me with the murderer?"

"Yes."
"On what theory?"
"They argue you want to throw the thing on some one else; but they have ciphered down, and they think it will be the right thing to pipe you. That's why they arrested you."

"And you freed me?"
"I did."
"And to spite them?"
"Yes."
"You had some other reason."
"Did I?"
"Yes; and now, what is it?"
"You appear to know."
"I want you to tell me."
"I can't."
"Why not?"
"Say, mister, you are free and clear."
"Will those men arrest me again?"
"I can't tell; you had better lay low."
"Boy, if you will come into my employ you will make big money."

The boy laughed, and said:
"You have not stolen enough money in all your life to pay me!"

The man lost his temper. He was a strong man, and he said:
"Hold on! You are getting impudent."
"That's my failing."
"You are a rogue."
"Thank you. You can not prove it. I can prove you are a scoundrel, and I will some day."

The man made a strike at the lad, and the next instant he lay sprawling on the ground, and Eddie had sped away.

Eddie was the wrong lad for any man to attempt to hurt. He was as strong as an ordinary man and as spry as a cat; and, besides, he was always on his guard and armed with a peculiar sort of defensive weapon which enabled him to do wonders in the art of downing men larger and stronger than himself.

Having downed the man Alvarez, Eddie skipped away, while Isidor rose to his feet, feeling a little dazed. As his senses fully returned, he muttered:

"Well, this is a go! There is something very strange going on here. And yet that boy told me the truth, after all—yes, I am sure he did. I remember now, while I was talking to Baily, two other men were lounging around, and it may have been a put-up scheme, and it is indeed possible that they are on to my trail, under the suspicion that I am a murderer. Well, well; let it go. I will act quickly now. Yes, Mr. Kelley, I will put them on the right track!"

It will be remembered that Mattie left the man Alvarez under the care of his pal. Our readers will also recall that the wonderful Eddie downed the pal and led the man Alvarez away.

Mattie was working a scheme, and after half an hour he returned to the room where he had left his prisoner. He found his pal sitting around in an odd and dazed sort of manner, and the prisoner had disappeared.

"Hullo, Cronin! where is your prisoner?"
"Gone."
"Where has he gone?"

"With the devil, I reckon, or I've been dreaming."

"You may have fallen over. You've been asleep."

"I've been pretty near my last long sleep, I reckon."

"Come, man, talk up. What has happened?"

"I can just recollect."
"Well, what do you recollect, old man?"
"I was sitting there."
"Yes."

"Suddenly I received a terrible rap, and over I went."

"Go on."
"Then I saw a lad slip the darbies off the prisoner, and the two left the room together."

"Why didn't you interfere?"
"I was paralyzed by the blow."
"And you say it was a lad?"
"Yes."
"But what sort of a lad?"

"That is all I can recall. I know he stole up behind me and gave me the rap, and I know he released the prisoner, and that is all I do know."

"And the prisoner is away?"
"He is gone."

Mattie was mad, and with an oath he left the room, and a few moments later he was talking to his pard Baily. He said:

"That boy again."
"What do you mean?"
Mattie told his story, and Baily said:
"There is a big game going on around us, Mattie."

"Sure enough; but now it's our turn to play. Now we must find out the identity of all engaged in this scheme."

"We will."
"It is no easy job."
"We can't run it down."

"We will try; and the first thing we must do is to catch the lad."

"I will undertake to do that."

"Good enough. I leave the job to you, and I will get on to the name of the man."

"Then let's start right in."

"We will."

The detectives held some further talk and then separated.

During all the time the incidents that we have narrated were transpiring, Al Stetson was not idle.

After leaving the chief, Al went to see several old-time pals, with whom he also held a long talk, and it was well on toward evening when he returned to his lodgings. He found Eddie lying asleep on the lounge, but the instant Old Phenomenal entered the room his little pal was on his feet.

"Halloo, Uncle Al! you are here?"
"Yes, I am here."

"What have you to report?"

"Eh? What have I to report?" demanded the great detective, a smile on his face.
"Yes; what have you to report?"

"Nothing particular, chief. What have you to report?"

"I've been lazy."
"Did you run down your man?"

"Yes, and I knocked him down after I had downed another chap."

"You have been actively engaged."
"Well, I have; and I've picked up a little news, too."

"Let's have it."

Eddie proceeded and told his "tale of woe."

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN Eddie had concluded the narrative of his adventures, Al said:

"Eddie, you're a good one, but you must be careful."

"That's just what I am. I was careful to down that fellow and not let him down me."

"There was a scheme in arresting that man."

"Sure."

"They were going to frighten something out of him."

"That was my idea, and as I thought it didn't agree with your plans, I just set in and let him get away."

"It was a good idea; but, lad, you are running a great risk."

"Do you want some fun?"

"Sing it out."

"Why don't you make up for Alvarez?"

"And then?"

"Let those fellows take you into confidence. You may learn something."

"That is a good scheme, Ed. We will think of it later on. In the meantime I want an interview with this sweet Isidor myself."

"Call on Miss Essie. She will signal, and Isidor will appear. He wants to meet you, and he will have you neat and handy."

"That is the scheme I mean to carry out to-night."

"There is one thing you must look out for."

"And that is?"

"Baily and his pal are after that fellow."

"Yes."

"They may strike his trail and follow him to the home of Essie."

"I've thought of that, and I must have you near me when I run in on the lay."

"I will be around, sure."

"All right. I will run in on the woman as I did before, mask and all."

"And she will signal."

"All right."

"They may re-enforce for you. How will you arrange for that?"

"I reckon you and I can manage their re-enforcements."

"We may; but it's better to be on the safe side."

It was just a little before midnight when a man and a boy met near the residence of the woman Essie Hinsdale.

"Well, Ed, how goes it?" was the question.
"There's a young fellow laying around, waiting for a signal."

"We must take care of that young fellow for a few moments."

"I will take care of him easy enough."

"Better set right in, and then be on the lookout."

"I will; you wait the bird signal."

"Yes."

"When the man shows up."

"Yes."

"Good enough. If alone it will be a single call, with the echo; if there is any one with him, a call for each man, and no echo."

"That is plain enough."

"And now I will go and attend to the fellow in waiting."

"Go it!"

Eddie glided away. The nerve, address, coolness of the lad were simply marvelous. He walked along, well got up for the business he had in hand, and approached a young man who was seated on a stoop. The lad stopped opposite his man and stared until the fellow said:

"Who are you looking at?"

"You!" came the answer.

"Well, you start."

"No, I won't."

"You hear what I say?"

"Don't go too fast, mister. I think I am looking for you."

"What do you mean?"

"If you are the man I am looking for, some one else wants to see you."

"How will you find out whether or not I am the man?"

"His name is Alfred."

The young man gave a start, and asked:

"Who sent you to find me?"

"Then your name is Alfred?"

"Maybe it is."

"If your name is Alfred, come with me; if your name is not Alfred, don't come with me, that's all."

"Where shall I go?"

"There's a man wants to see you a moment."

"What sort of a looking man is he?"

Eddie described Isidor.

"Where is the man?"

"On the corner of — and — streets. He will wait for you there. He wants to see you just one minute, that's all."

Alfred started away, badly fooled, and Eddie chuckled as a few moments later, he saw Al Stetson enter the house where Essie Hinsdale resided. Eddie then glided away to a place of cover and a good *cognac d'avantage*.

A few moments passed, and the young man returned, and he was looking around for the mysterious lad who had sent him on a fool's errand. Eddie was watching, and had a second quiet little laugh.

A few moments passed, and our little pal saw a signal from the house. Alfred saw it also, and glided away.

Al Stetson entered the house. The great detective glided on tiptoe up the stairs. He went thus silently, although not at all averse to having his presence known, for he believed his coming was anticipated.

Al arrived opposite the door of the room. He peeped in, and there was the woman. She sat at a table, and was reading a letter. The detective saw a look of resolve and determination upon her face.

Al only waited and watched an instant, and then he boldly entered the room. He wore a mask, and looked very much as he had appeared upon the occasion of his former visit. The woman did not appear at all disconcerted upon beholding the intruder; indeed, she said:

"So you are here, Mr. Burglar?"

"Yes, I am here."

"What is your errand?"

"I came to have a little talk with you, Essie. You have had time to think, and I deemed it possible that by this time you had made up your mind to take me into your scheme."

"So you think I will take you into my scheme?"

"Yes."

"You still indulge the idea that I have a scheme?"

"It is no idea with me; it is a dead certainty."

"You are certainly very confident."

"I am."

The woman arose from her seat. She went to her mirror, looked at her really handsome face, arranged her hair, and said, in a jaunty tone:

"This is very novel, and charming because of its novelty."

"To what do you allude, Essie?"

"To your presence here, and your hallucination."

"What is my illusion?"

"That I can not say. But one thing I will say: You run a great risk; you are at this moment in great peril."

"How is that?"

"I expected you."

"Well?"

"You will not have it all your own way this time."

"That's good."

The detective saw that the woman was talking what detectives call guff. She was talking for time. Our hero knew she desired to signal and she was working around to do so, and at the same time avoid detection.

"You had it all your own way when you were here before."

"Did I?"

"You did. And now let me tell you something. You accuse me of being engaged in a scheme. I know you are engaged in a scheme, and I shall hand you over to the police. I have arranged to summon the police."

"Why didn't you have your policemen at hand?"

"I thought I'd give you a chance."

"What chance do you desire to give me?"

"I will give you a chance to explain who you are and what are your motives."

"You are very kind."

"There is some one behind you—an arch-villain who is annoying me—a blackmailer who has sought to obtain money from me. I have reason to believe that you are acting in his behalf. I give you the benefit of a doubt."

"What doubt, pray?"

"I think you have been deceived."

"By whom?"

"The man who is seeking to blackmail me."

"This is good, Essie."

"You persist in calling me Essie?"

"I do."

"That is a part of that man's scheme?"

"If what you say is the truth, why do you stand here fooling with me? If I am the tool of a blackmailer, why do you not send for the police at once and have done with the annoyance?"

"I will in good time. Indeed, I expect the police every moment."

The woman had unconsciously walked toward the window. The detective pretended to look away, and saw her take immediate advantage of his movement, and signal. He smiled as she returned to her seat opposite to him at the table. From under his mask he fixed his eyes on the woman, and in a derisive tone asked:

"When will the funeral of the dead cat occur?"

The woman shuddered, and answered:

"You brute! I should think you would wish to forget that act of cruelty."

The detective laughed, and said:

"Ah, madame, it's no use putting on the heroics with me."

"You are more insulting than before."

"Then send for the police."

"The police may be nearer than you dream."

"That's good. I feel safer since you tell me that; and, Miss Essie Hinsdale, what is the use of our fooling? Will you take me into your scheme?"

"You wretch! Your question is an insult."

"Is it?"

"You know it is. You are taking advantage of a woman."

"I am, eh? Well, madame, since I was here last I've been investigating."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, madame; and you will take me into the scheme, or it fails."

CHAPTER XVIII.

SINCE the woman had been able to signal she appeared braver, and she laughed in a very derisive manner as she said:

"I hope you made some very startling discoveries?"

"I did."

"You are the coolest villain I ever met in all my life. It is indeed novel, or I would summon the police and have you arrested at once."

"Criminals never summon the police; they are always avoiding them."

"You will repent your words."

"Very well. But answer me: Will you take me into your scheme?"

"If I had a scheme, I should be very glad to have a man of your nerve and cheek aiding me."

"Essie Hinsdale, let me tell you something: A man is leading you on into great peril. You had better pause and consider ere you rush headlong to the jail, and finally to the gallows."

"How moral you are becoming for a burglar—a self-confessed burglar."

"I am warning you. Let me tell you that you are in peril, a greater peril than you dream. Let me tell you that your whole scheme is known, and—"

The detective was interrupted at this moment. A man entered the room, and at the same instant a certain strange sound fell upon the detective's ear. It was a signal. It came from the street, and he knew that the man had not entered the house alone. The man of iron nerve, Old Phenomenal, did not quail; not a nerve quivered. He was as cool as ice when the man said:

"Ah, you scoundrel, I've come just in time!"

"Yes, Alvarez, you've come just in time. I see you are on the police force now."

The woman started back in surprise and wonder when the detective mentioned the name Alvarez.

A moment the man stood and gazed, and then involuntarily he demanded:

"Who are you?"

The detective laughed, and answered:

"Oh, I am only a poor burglar with very benevolent intentions."

"You are a scoundrel. You are here to blackmail and terrorize this lady."

"I am? And who are you?"

"You appear to know who I am."

The detective laughed, and said:

"Now I know; at first I only suspected. I see you do answer to the name of Isidor Alvarez."

The man could have bitten his lip clear through. He saw how he had been nicely trapped.

"Who are you?" he again demanded.

"I am only a poor burglar, as I told you."

"We generally hand burglars over to the police."

"Why don't you hand me over to the police?"

"I may in the end."

"Oh, no; you never will."

"There was design in your coming here."

"You are right."

"Will you name your purpose?"

"I am here to save this woman."

"Has this woman solicited your aid?"

"Oh, nonsense; go on with your game."

"What game?"

"Your great scheme to steal a fortune."

The man Alvarez laughed outright.

"So you think I have a scheme to steal a fortune?"

"Yes."

"Stranger, let me say something in your favor."

"Go it."

"I think you are a dupe."

"I am not a dupe."

"It is plain you are; and let me tell you a villain has filled your ears with some wild tale—a blackmailer who has made several offers to me which I have rejected."

"If what you say is true, why do you not arrest the man?—why do you not arrest me? I stand here and accuse you."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you are a murderer; and if you will take things calmly, I will ask you a few questions."

"Go on and ask your questions."

"My first question is: What is your scheme?"

"It is my scheme to baffle a villain who is seeking to blackmail an orphan young lady."

"If that is your scheme, why do you not call in the services of the police?"

"I have called in the services of the police."

"I will ask you some more questions."

"Proceed."

"Where is George Heath—in his grave, as your victim?"

The man did not quail or show any signs of perturbation when the detective put his startling question. He merely laughed, and said:

"My suspicion is confirmed. I see that I was right. The blackmailing scoundrel is your mentor. You are in the scheme."

"I have one more question to ask."

"Proceed."

"Where is Adele Heath?"

"I expected those questions, and I can answer both."

"Do so."

"George Heath is in his grave. He died in my presence and in the presence of others. His sister and heir is here before you. Have you any more questions to ask?"

"Who was the dead woman whose body was found at the — Hotel?"

"I think you should be able to answer that question."

"The question I address to you."

"You address it to the wrong person."

"Whom should I address it to, sir?"

"The man who murdered that woman."

"Ah, now you talk!"

"I am glad."

"I now repeat the question, and I address it to the man who murdered the woman."

The fellow Alvarez gave a little start, and asked:

"What do you mean?"

"My words are plain. I am on to your whole scheme."

"You go too far."

"Yes, in the right direction in my pursuit of a villain—a murderer, I fear."

"And who are you?"

"Do you really wish to establish my identity?"

"I do, you scoundrel! and I will before you leave this house."

"I trust you will not attempt anything rash."

"I have a right to know who you are, and I will know."

"Why is it so necessary to know who I am?"

"You have used language here that proves you are one of the conspirators."

"Then why do you not arrest me?"

"I may have you arrested."

"That's all right."

"Who are you?"

"Suppose I say my name is Baily."

The man Alvarez was really disconcerted at last. Upon entering the room he had taken a seat, but when the detective announced the name in a tentative manner the man actually rose from his seat and paced the floor.

"You are not Baily."

"I did not say I was; but I will recall a few little incidents, and then you may know who I am."

It was a strange scene presented at that moment, and if the man before him really was Baily, the fellow Alvarez was indeed in great peril, and he fully realized it.

"Tell the incidents."

"A man who would not give his name sent for Baily."

The man Alvarez turned deathly pale, and our hero said:

"Ah! I see it makes you tremble."

"What makes me tremble?"

"My statement. Now mark me, you've been going too fast."

The woman also showed signs of great perturbation. She discerned that the strange intruder, the mysterious, self-confessed burglar, was gaining points on the skillful Alvarez.

"The man who sent for Baily gave some very important information. He told Baily where he could find certain articles which would serve as indices to unravel the mystery of the murderer."

"All right, proceed."

"Baily went to the hotel."

"Yes."

"He found everything just as the man had told him."

"Well?"

"An idea then struck Baily. It came to him as a very suspicious circumstance that this man, who would not reveal his identity, should know all these facts."

"And what have I to do with all this nonsense?"

"Wait and see. Baily set to work to investigate, and his first move was to learn all the circumstances."

"Ah, what nonsense!"

"You may not think it such nonsense when I get through, for Baily picked up a great deal."

Both the man and woman showed signs of great perturbation.

"I am not concerned in the matter."

"But you are."

"How you rascal?"

"Wait, be patient, and I will tell you. Yes, I'll make your hair stand on end, my friend."

CHAPTER XIX.

The scene presented was an interesting one. The man Alvarez looked ghastly; the woman also showed signs of great fear and terror. There was something awful in the coolness and directness of the man whose face was concealed by a mask, and in calm tones the detective proceeded, and said:

"Yes, Baily had his suspicions aroused, and he started out on a little shadow. He started to shadow the man who had given him the information—the man who had led him to believe that the murdered woman was Essie Hinsdale—and it was not long before Baily made two remarkable and singular discoveries. He learned that the dead woman was not Essie Hinsdale. He learned that the dead woman was not Adele Heath. He learned that the man who had put him on the track of the little in dices was the intimate friend and co-worker with the woman Essie Hinsdale."

Indeed, the appearance of the two auditors of the detective was a study as he laid down the facts we have recorded. He came to a dead pause and asked:

"What do you think now, Alvarez?"

"Who was this man?"

The voice of the inquirer trembled as he put the question.

"You should know who the man was."

"I do not."

"That's strange. I do, and you should know even better."

"I begin to see the depth of this conspiracy now."

"But you forget Baily did not seek this man. The man sought him, and did not know he was playing with fire. And now let me tell you I have a proposition to make."

"Proceed. I will listen just for my amusement."

"My proposition is this: haul off, and we will call it a draw."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that a great scheme is on foot. I did not know the plaus were so well laid. But they will not succeed."

"Do you accuse Baily of being in any scheme?"

"No. Baily has been imposed upon."

"By whom?"

"The man who met him and gave him the information. All in good time I will reveal the identity of that man to Mr. Baily."

"That is fair; but your services will not be needed. Mr. Baily knows the identity of the man full well."

"He may think he does."

The detective smiled under his mask. He saw the game the man was preparing to play, and recognized that the fellow was full of resources.

"You say he may think he knows his man?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"He has been deceived."

"How?"

"I'll speak plainly."

"Do so."

"I see the drift of your little wordy masquerade."

"What do you see?"

"I expect to hear you say that Baily discovered that I am the man."

"How well you have it."

"Baily has been fooled."

"How?"

"I have a double."

"That's not uncommon."

"I've been aware of it for a long time. This double is playing us, as he thinks. It is a very deep game, but I will match him."

"That is good for you, if what you say is the truth; but let me ask you one question. Is it you or your double who is intimate with this lady? For there is no doubt as to her identity. She has no double."

"Whom do you claim this lady to be?"

"I claim this lady is the real Essie Hinsdale."

"You are deceived."

The detective laughed, and said:

"What a fool I am getting to be! But now listen: your game won't work on the man."

"On what man?"

"Baily."

"You are Baily."

"I have not said so."

"I am to presume you are."

"If I am Baily I can identify the man who gave Baily the information."

"Suppose you see the double."

"I'd like to see him, and I'd like to see this lady's double, for then I could put the real people, as you claim them, in jail or hang them."

Matters were working down to a crisis. The face of the man Alvarez became livid. He looked over at the woman, and he said:

"This affair—this farce has gone far enough."

"So I think."

"I must see your face. I must—I will know who you are."

"Suppose I refuse to remove my mask?"

"I will remove it for you."

The detective uttered a laugh, and said:

"Do not go too fast."

"You have spoken strange words. I must—I will know who you are."

"If what you claim is true, my words are indeed strange, and you should call the police at once."

"I will," came the answer.

Suddenly two men entered the room. They sprung upon the detective, but a little, little figure leaped into the room. The two men were armed with clubs. They had evidently received their orders. But ere either one could strike a blow, both were knocked to the floor so quickly that it seemed like magic.

The little figure downed the two men and disappeared. He had appeared like a flash, and like a flash he vanished, but there lay his victims on the floor.

The detective had leaped to his feet just in time to behold the figure vanishing from the room, and for once in his life the attack had come in an unexpected manner.

Al looked at the two men and then at the man Alvarez, and after a moment he said:

"Well, well, what a night will bring forth! What have you to say now, Mister Man?"

"I do not know what it means. I suppose it is some farce you have got up for our benefit."

"Oh! that is your idea, eh?"

"It is my firm belief."

"You are a man of resources. You are a very smart man, an excellent schemer; but for once you are overmatched, my friend. A few moments ago I gave you some good advice."

"I forgot it."

"Possibly you will assume you did, but nevertheless my advice was good. And now let me tell you something. You desired to see me; you have succeeded. I do not think you have enjoyed the interview; and as to your whole scheme I call you to a halt, and I demand now that you tell me where I will find George Heath."

"You will find what is left of him in his grave."

"Dare you claim, after what has occurred, that you are not up to some scheme?"

"Dare you accuse me of being engaged in any scheme?"

"I dare."

"I laugh at you. I am merely seeking to circumvent a scheme."

"And then, what meant this well-played plan to murder me?"

"You are mistaken; it was merely a plan to learn who you are."

"I reckon you know who I am. But I will bid you good-morning. I have given you every chance. You appear to be determined to go on with your scheme. I now warn you: I am on to every move. I know every trick you intend to play. I will play against you. I will hang you if George Heath is in his grave. I will hold you responsible for his death. If Adele Heath is not forthcoming, I will hold you responsible for her death, and I will prove your guilt. And if the dead girl at the —— Hotel was murdered, I will prove you her murderer."

"You are taking a big contract."

"I have the bulge on you, Alvarez."

"I do not fear you. I can see how well planned is the conspiracy, but I do not fear you."

The two men lying upon the floor showed signs of reviving, and for reasons the detective determined to go away, and he left the room. The man Alvarez and the woman stood gazing in each other's faces, and finally, in a very tremulous voice, the woman said:

"What did I tell you? Is he not a terrible man?"

"Bab! He had the advantage. He was prepared."

"How is it he was prepared? How is it he knew your moves, and was able to circumvent you?"

"That is a mystery I can not explain."

"You heard what he said?"

"I did."

"He knows all your moves."

"That was an idle boast."

"Who is Baily?"

"He is a man I am using."

"How is it this man knows all your moves so well?"

"That is a mystery, I tell you, I can not explain."

"But he certainly expected you here."

"Ah! there is the mystery."

"Oh, Isidor, my heart is filled with terror!"

"You need not fear: it will all come right."

"I can not see it in that light. There is a terrible man on our track. You heard all he said?"

"I did."

"He said he would hold you responsible for George Heath's murder; he said he would hold you responsible for Adele, and for the dead woman found at the —— Hotel."

"Bah! all idle threats. The next time we meet I will be so prepared that he is already a doomed man."

CHAPTER XX.

The two men revived while the conversation we have narrated was in progress, and they were ordered from the room without explanation, and the conversation between Essie Hinsdale and the man Alvarez continued:

"Isidor," said the woman, "we are doomed."

"Hush, woman! you have lost your head. Where is your old-time courage and nerve?"

"But this man?"

"I can beat him. I will make a move that will settle this whole matter. Listen to me, Essie: I am determined to win. I am not beaten; I am only temporarily foiled. I am a little dazed, as I did not anticipate what has occurred; but next time I will be ready. I will have a man on that fellow's track who will run him down—who will go under his mask."

"You are sure it is not Baily?"

"I am."

"Then this man must be working in with Baily?"

"No. I am mystified; but I will get at the bottom of the whole affair. I tell you; all is clear yet, and we will win at the last. I have cards to play that are sure ones. I do not fear; my confidence is not shaken. I am only set back a little, but now I am myself again. I know what I have to encounter; that is all I ever need. I will be on to this man's track like a Nemesis; I will remove him from our path. I will move rapidly now."

"You do not appear to comprehend."

"Comprehend what?"

"The singular fact of this man's knowledge. He knows me; he knows you by name; he knows all about George Heath; he knows the object of the hotel trick. Indeed, I ask, what is there this wonderful, terrible man does not know?"

"It can all be explained."

"It can?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"He is some fellow Kalley has employed. I will soon be on this Kalley's track, and then all will be well. You can trust me. I always win; I never lose. I am in to win; I will not lose the game. You do not know me yet, that is plain."

"But so far you have been overmatched."

"Not so. I have only had something opened up to me. I now know just how to act."

The conversation continued between the man and the woman; and while it was in progress a little talk was going on between our hero and his sharp, active aid, Eddie.

Al Stetson left the house and gained the street. He had gone but a few steps when he was joined by Ed, who glided alongside and asked:

"What are the orders now?"

"Eddie, you saved me."

"Did I?"

"Yes; for once I was taken off my guard."

"I gave you the signal."

"I heard it and understood, but I did not expect the attack to come just in that shape."

"I was on deck."

"You were, and just in time."

"I saw the two men enter the house with the man Alvarez. I had no orders, but I thought it would be a good scheme to follow them in and give you the other signal from the inside."

"It is lucky you so decided."

"I think so; but I did not signal as we had arranged; I did not have time, so I acted."

"And you acted just right, and just in time."

"I reckon I did. And now, how does the thing stand? What do you want me to do?"

"I think we can haul off for to-night, and in a few days I will set you on the trail of your life."

"I am ready always."

"Yes, you are always ready. You are a great man, Eddie."

On the day following the incidents we have narrated Al Stetson made up his mind to work a great scheme. He was an inventive genius, and he was very fond of working great schemes.

He went to the house of the man Kalley.

"Well, you are here?"

"Yes, I am here; and, old man, I am on a close study, and I need your help."

"I am at your service."

"They worked a dummy for you once?"

"Now I am mystified."

"He worked a dummy at the hotel."

"Yes."

"I mean he shall arrest a dummy."

"And who will be the dummy?"

"I will."

"I begin to see into your scheme."

"Yes; I will make up for you."

"What a huge joke!"

"I enjoy jokes when we can secure good results from them."

The detective went to work in a very deliberate manner to make a study, and then he retired to another room, and after half an hour he appeared before Kalley. The latter stared in amazement, and exclaimed:

"Great guns! it's magic."

"No, it's all right."

"You had better give up your present business and go on the stage; you will make a fortune."

"The art serves me better in my business."

"If Alvarez meets you, your life will be in peril."

"How?"

"That man intends to murder me."

"So much the worse for him. But I think he has another scheme; at least, I have, and a far reaching one—a scheme that neither he nor no one else can beat; and I will also have my little joke. But you think my disguise works well?"

"It is simply marvelous. Had I met you unprepared, I should have run away from myself."

"And this man Alvarez knows you well enough to recognize me?"

"He does—yes."

"Good enough."

"I would like to be present when the mask is thrown off."

"You shall hear all about it, and that will serve just as well."

While our hero was arranging his plans, the man Alvarez was also arranging a plan. He devoted a long time to consideration, and finally ejaculated:

"Yes, I am satisfied it was all a deception. How the information was obtained I can not tell; that is indeed one of the mysteries; but it makes little difference. I have resolved upon my course, and I will carry it out. It needs bold play now, and I am the man to play a bold game when necessity demands it."

While our hero was holding his talk with Kalley, Alvarez was showing himself in order to invite an interview with Baily. The game had commenced—a great game between two men of genius, the difference being that one man was exercising strategy on the side of right, and the other was scheming on the side of wrong.

Our hero left Kalley, as stated, and proceeded to meet his little aid, Eddie, and to the latter he said:

"Ed, I have an idea in my mind, and I have business for you. I want you to get on the trail of Alvarez, and do not leave him until you bring some news."

"What news do you expect, master?"

"He may hold a little talk with Baily."

"Ah! I see."

"And I want you to listen."

"I catch on."

A few moments after the conversation recorded, Eddie was out on a hunt. The lad had received a hint, and he went straight to the hotel where Alvarez and Tom Baily had held several interviews.

As our readers will remember, through the intervention of Eddie, Alvarez had been re-

leased. The two detectives were well assured that the lad had a hand in the affair, although under whose inspiration they had not determined.

Baily and Mattie had a talk, and the former said:

"I want to meet that man again."

"You will not meet him, Tom."

"Why not?"

"He will lay low now."

"I am of a different opinion. I think he will seek me."

"Ah, no!"

"He has reason to suspect that I had a hand in his arrest."

"I don't see on what you build your theory."

"He has a scheme to work through me."

"And what will you do now?"

"I will be governed by circumstances. One thing is certain, I do not believe he had a hand in the murder, but I do think he has a game to play."

"And where are you going now?"

"To the hotel. He has been looking for me."

"You have received an intimation?"

"The intimation I received was born in my own mind; but I feel certain, all the same."

Tom Baily and Mattie walked to the hotel, and almost the first man Tom's eyes fell on was the man Alvarez.

"Ah, Mattie! do you see?"

"By George, it's strange!"

"I've reasoned well, eh?"

"You have."

The two men had changed their appearance. As our old-time readers know, a certain class of detectives are always prepared to make their changes.

The two detectives separated, and Baily lay low, and in good time he hooked on to his man.

"Halloo," he said, "are you looking for me?"

"Aha! changed again."

"Yes; in our business we change."

"That was a nice little job you put up on me."

"I do not understand."

"The arrest."

"Who arrested you?"

"We will let that pass. I promised you some information?"

"You did."

"You seek the murderer of Essie Hinsdale?"

"I do."

"I can open up the mystery to you; and I will on one condition."

"Name it."

"I shall not be called on, or in any way implicated until the time of the man's trial. If so, I will give you all the information you need."

"Those terms will suit me," was the answer.

CHAPTER XXI.

"I WILL tell you a tale."

"Do so."

"A young man was my patient. I am a physician. He was a very wealthy man. He had no heirs but one sister. At his death he made his sister his sole heiress, and I was made his executor and trustee. He had one friend, or, rather, there was a man who claimed to be his friend, but he was really a designing rascal. This fellow, whose name is Kalley, secured a girl who, as he thought, resembled the sister of my dead patient. There were facts that encouraged a fraud. This fellow determined to practice a fraud, and he induced the girl to join with him. It was his intention to introduce her as the real heiress and secure the estate.

"I discovered his intentions; I frustrated them, and in order to convict him I induced the girl to make a full and complete confession. I intended to use her as a witness. She told the rascal what she had done, and what she intended to do. He became terror-stricken.

"As it now appears, he had already secured a second party to use in his fraud, a girl who is a singular and striking double of the real heiress. If the girl confessed and appeared as a witness against him, his scheme would fall through, and he would probably go to jail for life, as he had committed several gross felonies. But one thing remained for him to do: he must get the girl out of the way."

Baily listened with deep attention.

"What was the girl's name?" he asked.

"Essie Hinsdale."

"That was the name of the murdered girl?"

"Yes."

"And he did murder her?"

"That you are to establish. It is my opinion the man will confess when once arrested. At any rate, I can give you the most conclusive proofs; but, as I say, I must not appear in the matter until the last moment."

"That is all right."

"The fellow has secured several to join with him. There seems to be a regular band of conspirators. They will swear to anything, but, fortunately, I can bring the proper proof to refute them. They will try to establish that the real Adele Heath is Essie Hinsdale."

"Why did you not tell me all this before?"

"There is one man—a very dangerous man—engaged in the conspiracy, whose identity I wished to establish."

"Have you succeeded?"

"No; and I am afraid of my own life; so I determined to make a full confidant of you."

"Who is the lad who appears to be engaged in the affair?"

"I do not know."

"He released you?"

"Yes."

"What did he say when he released you?"

"He gave me no explanation. Indeed, he was insulting. I meant to seize him and force him to a confession, when, in the most singular, rapid, and mysterious manner, he knocked me down and disappeared."

The detective recalled how he too had been knocked down in a rapid and most mysterious manner.

"Do you know where to find the man Kalley?"

"I do not; but I believe he is here in New York."

"Can you furnish a description of his person?"

"I can do more. I can give you a good photograph, secured under the instantaneous process."

Alvarez showed a picture.

"I never saw the man," said Baily, as he glanced at it.

"One word. Show that photograph to the clerk at the hotel where the murder occurred."

"For what purpose?"

"He will identify it as a picture of the young man who registered at the hotel a short time after the girl registered who was murdered."

"If you can prove this, why should we establish the identification?"

"I can not prove it. I have been working on a theory. What I told you were suggestions prompted by what I suspected his plan would be."

"Then you can not prove he was the man?"

"No. If the clerk at the hotel identifies that picture, how will that count?"

"It will hang the original."

"That is what I believe."

"How about the fellow you call the mysterious man?"

"I can not get on to his identity at all."

"You have seen him?"

"Yes; but he was under a cover."

"What was his appearance when under cover?"

Alvarez gave a description.

"I think I've seen the same man."

"He is a very smart man—deep and secret."

"You are sure it is not Kalley?"

"I think not—indeed I am sure."

"Can you give me any clew as to the possible whereabouts of this man Kalley?"

"I can not, more than the fact that he is somewhere here in New York."

"Where is the real heiress?"

"She is under my protection."

"Has any attempt been made to do her harm?"

"Yes; and what is more, they have laid a plan to prove she is Essie Hinsdale."

"What is your name?"

"I am Doctor Alvarez, and I can prove my respectability."

After a few words, Alvarez said:

"The mysterious man is on my track."

"Yes."

"I fear he seeks to do me harm. If I were out of the way they would have clear sailing for the carrying out of their scheme."

"Yes."

"He must be in constant communication with Kalley."

"I see."

"He haunts me like a shadow."

"We will find him, and we will haunt him like a shadow. And now, when will I meet you?"

"To-night; and we will put up a scheme to find this man."

"At what hour?"

"Say ten o'clock."

"Where?"

"Here."

"I will be on hand."

The two men separated. Alvarez went away, and Baily rejoined his partner, Mattie.

"Well, old man, what did you make out?"

"I am on to the whole business. All my theories have been fully confirmed."

Baily related to his partner all that had occurred, and when he had concluded, Mattie said:

"It looks fair enough, but there is a slight possibility."

"What is the possibility?"

"He may be the conspirator."

"It is possible, I have thought of that; but our road is open."

"What is your idea?"

"We will secure Kalley."

"Yes."

"We will hear his side of the story."

"I have a theory, Tom."

"What is your theory?"

"I will not give it out now; but we will follow out your plan."

"There is one thing bothers me."

"Well?"

The mysterious man—the tale he tells about him sounds queer."

"Yes; and the strange fellow who is dodging around does not act like a criminal. He is playing too bold a game."

Baily and Mattie made their plans, and while they were so arranging, Eddie returned, and joined his partner.

"Well, young man, I see by your face you have something to report."

"I have."

Ed related all that had passed between Baily and the man Alvarez. Al Stetson listened, and a smile overspread his face.

"So, so; that's their game, eh? Good enough; I will have some rare sport to-night."

Eddie received his instructions, and Old Phenomenal arranged some other plans.

At ten o'clock the great game opened, and our hero started in to have his fun.

Alvarez appeared at the hotel on time, and Baily also was on hand. The two men met.

"Did your mysterious man show up?" asked Tom.

"No."

"Then we have nothing on hand?"

"Yes, his shadow, the lad; that little devil who knocked me down."

"Then you conclude that he is working in with Old Mysterious?"

"Yes; I had another run in with him."

"When?"

"Not twenty minutes ago."

"Under what circumstances?"

"I was on my way here, when suddenly that lad appeared before me, and in an off-hand manner exclaimed:

"Halloo, doctor! Where are you going?" he asked. "Look out for that man Baily; he is laying for you, and will hook you again!" Having thus warned me, he ran off."

"They appear to have your movements down fine."

"They do; and that is the remarkable part of it."

"You say the real heiress is under your care?"

"Yes."

"I'd like to see her."

"You can."

"When?"

"After we have got on to the track of the man Kalley."

"How is it they get on to your movements so well?"

"I said that is a mystery I can not fathom."

"I'd like to see that lad."

"We will put up a game to catch him."

"We will."

"He or the man he serves will show up."

"What makes you think so?"

"I am now fully convinced I am being shadowed all the time."

"And then?"

"Some one may show up."

"Ah! I see."

The two men continued their talk for some time, going over the ground concerning the murder, when suddenly Alvarez exclaimed:

"Great Jupiter! there he is."

CHAPTER XXII.

At the moment Alvarez uttered the exclamation a man had entered the hotel reading-room. The doctor had turned very pale, and spoke in an excited and tremulous tone.

"Who is it?" asked Baily.

"Can you not recognize him?"

"Where is he?"

"There!"

The doctor pointed to the man, and the detective also betrayed a little excitement as he said:

"It's Kalley."

"It's the very man."

"This is all I want. Leave the affair to me now, I'd like to have a talk with him alone. Will you grant me that privilege?"

"It's a strange request."

"I can draw something from him; he is a weak man; you need not fear him. One thing, doctor, I will tell you now: we will get at the bottom of this whole affair."

"That is what I want you to do."

"I've changed my plan. Do you think that man has recognized you?"

"I think he must have done so; he has evidently followed me here."

"That shows something. But my plan is this: you go from here; he may follow you; it is evident he is seeking to have a word with you."

"He may intend to murder me."

"You need not fear while we are around."

"You will close in on him?"

"That depends upon circumstances. We will wait and learn what develops. Do not go away straight. Linger around; act as though you were not aware of any one's presence. We will be on the watch, and at the right moment you saunter away. We will follow."

"Do not make a formal arrest. Your plan to watch is good."

"Go now. We understand our business."

"If you arrest him now you will make a mistake."

"If we conclude to make the arrest we will not make a mistake. I do not believe we will arrest him. We will run him down, and pipe for testimonies."

The doctor moved away, and Baily joined Mattie. He told his partner the situation, and Mattie said:

"Do not make an arrest."

"I have no idea of making an arrest."

A few moments passed. The two detectives conversed and watched, and finally Baily said:

"Now we go."

As stated, they had talked and watched, and they saw Alvarez leave the hotel, but strangely enough the man Kalley did not follow him.

"Halloo we are off somewhere. The bait does not attract the fish."

"So much the better. We will have time to study our man."

"Suppose I make his acquaintance?"

"Go it."

"He does not know me. He may have you down fine."

"It is possible. I will walk away, and lay around for signals."

Baily hung around for a few moments, and then sauntered away. He entered the bar-room and engaged in conversation in a conventional way with two or three men whom he knew.

The man Kalley all the time appeared to be totally unconscious of all the planning and scheming going on around him. He walked over to a seat or sofa and drew a paper from his pocket. He commenced to read. Mattie watched his chance. He had often made chance acquaintances in hotels. He knew just how to work it, and in good time he took a seat beside the man he was piping. He looked at him sharply a moment, and finally said:

"Is your name Kalley, sir?"

"That is my name. I do not recall ever having met you."

"Were you ever in Paris?"

"I have spent several years in Paris."

"I reckon it was in Paris I met you. It is not strange you do not recollect me, and it is not strange that I should remember your name, for it is a very peculiar one."

"Yes; I reckon it was originally Kelley, and was changed by some of my ancestors a long way back."

"Are you residing in New York?"

"Yes."

"You have a family, of course?"

"No; I am a bachelor."

"How long since you were in Paris?"

"I left Paris about a year ago."

"And you have been in New York ever since?"

"No; I've only been in New York a few months. That was a strange affair at the Hotel the other night."

Mattie gave a start.

"Are you interested in any of the parties?"

"I think I knew the lady."

Mattie was taken dead aback.

"Do you think the woman was murdered?"

Kalley meditated a moment, and then said:

"I should say she was murdered."

"It's strange," muttered Mattie, in a low tone.

"What is strange?"

"That you should be interested in this case."

"I am not interested in it in the way you appear to suspect."

Mattie was perplexed. He talked a few minutes longer in a conventional way, and then bid Kalley good-day. He passed to the bar-room, signaled Baily, and walked out to the great corridor, and when joined by his comrade, he said:

"I am taken all aback."

"How?"

"There is some mystery in this affair."

"How?"

"He brought up the matter of the murder."

"Yes."

"He did not exhibit any concern. He talked as coolly as you or any other disinterested citizen would. He did say, however, that he thought he knew the identity of the dead woman."

"Then he is very deep and is playing a point."

"Certainly; I recognize that fact. And what point is he seeking to make?"

"What do you think?"

"He does not act or talk like a criminal, or like a man who fears anything. He did not shirk the subject. Indeed, I was amazed, as I say, at his coolness."

"What do you propose to do?"

"I propose that we now lay on to this man's trail and pipe him down before we do anything rash."

While the two detectives were talking they saw Kalley advancing down the corridor. They determined to follow him. Kalley passed to the street. Baily had not been seen by him, as the men supposed, and he started on the sashow. Mattie lay back and worked a complete transform, and he also started on the double shadow.

They followed their man from place to place until finally they saw him enter a well-known resort. Mattie had made himself known, and when the man entered the place he joined Baily and said:

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"We can not find out anything unless we make a move."

"Arrest him?"

"Yes."

"You're wrong."

"No; it's our best course. We will accuse him of the murder directly, and see what he has to say, watch how he acts."

"I am with you."

"When he comes out of that place we will close in on him."

"All right."

The two detectives lay low, and it was fully half an hour before the man Kalley came forth. When he did he walked slowly down the street. When suddenly Baily and Mattie pounced upon him, Kalley appeared greatly surprised, and asked:

"What does this mean? What do you mean? Why do you stop me on the public street?"

Both men showed their badges.

"What am I to understand?"

"You are under arrest."

"All right; I offer no resistance."

"It would not be well for you to do so."

"I will be taken at once before some one to whom I can offer an explanation."

"We will see about that."

A carriage was passing, Mattie hailed it, and all three men entered. Kalley was quiet and unresisting. The carriage drove away, and when it stopped, Kalley was directed to alight. He was led into the same house where Eddie had been cross-examined and to which the man Alvarez had been taken. The prisoner still remained passive, and did not offer any protest, and Mattie whispered

"We've got a strange customer."

"Yes, we have."

Kalley was led into the house and to that rear room where several very strange incidents had occurred. The three men took seats.

"You take your arrest coolly," said Baily.

"Yes, I do."

"Have you the least idea as to the charge against you?"

"That is not for me to say."

"You are arrested for the murder of the woman who was found dead in a room in the —— Hotel."

"Yes; I thought that was the charge."

"What have you to say?"

"Nothing."

"What do you know about the case?"

"What do you know about it?"

"We are not here to answer questions. We will listen to what you may have to say."

"I am not here to answer questions, either."

"You admit your guilt?"

"No."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I do not answer the questions of irresponsible parties."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Do you know that we are officers?"

"I suppose you are."

"Do you know that we are treating you very kindly?"

"How?"

"We are giving you a chance before turning you over to the authorities. At present you are only under suspicion. It may be you can relieve yourself of the suspicion. We will be glad if you will. We are not enemies of yours."

"You are young men. You have a great deal to learn; but you appear to be square men. How is it I am under suspicion?"

"That is something we are not bound to disclose."

"You received points, I reckon?"

Again the two detectives exchanged glances.

"We may have received points."

"From whom?"

"That we are not bound to tell."

"What are the circumstances that point to me as the criminal?"

Mattie spoke up, and said:

"We will hold a few moments' consultation."

"As you wish."

The two detectives withdrew to the front room. They did not close the door between themselves and the prisoner, and in the adjoining room, Mattie said:

"He is either a great rogue with a great nerve or he is an innocent man."

"I believe he is a great rogue with a great nerve."

"There is only one way to draw him."

"I yield the floor to you."

The two men returned to the room, and Mattie became the spokesman. He said:

"I will prove that we have most excellent reasons for your arrest."

"No doubt. You appear like two square men."

There was an odd smile on Kalley's face as he spoke that again caused the two detectives to exchange glances.

"I will go over the incidents," said Mattie.

"Do so."

"A dead body—the body of a young girl—was found in a room in the —— Hotel."

"Yes."

"There were certain indices that pointed to a murder."

"Yes."

"We started in to run down the facts."

"That was right."

"We learned as follows: At a certain hour the young lady arrived at the hotel."

"Yes."

"Half an hour later a young man arrived. The young man took a room adjoining the one occupied by the young lady. During the night the lady was murdered."

"How?" came the startling query.

"That is a matter we will demonstrate later on. But in the morning the young man had disappeared."

"What have I to do with it all?"

"You are the young man who registered after the girl, and who occupied the adjoining room, and who disappeared."

"How did you get on to all this?"

The two detectives were more and more amazed by their prisoner's coolness.

"We trailed down to the facts."

"You did?"

"We did."

"I know better."

"What do you know?"

"You received secret information."

"We did receive a hint."

"And I answer exactly to the description of the man?"

"You do."

"Who identified and described me?"

"The clerk of the hotel."

"He can swear to me?"

"Yes. He described you very accurately."

"Things look a little black for me, gentlemen. I will admit that the man who murdered the girl must have been the man who registered, as you say; that is, if the girl was really murdered."

"There is no question as to the murder."

"You can prove that?"

"We can."

Again there came a strange smile over the prisoner's face, and he said:

"Yes, things do look black against me, and I suppose you want an explanation from me?"

"That is what we want."

The prisoner meditated a moment, and then said:

"You shall have it on one condition."

"You will explain under a certain condition?" said Mattie.

"I will."

"What is your condition?"

"Send for the man who gave you the information. Let him confront me. He wishes to do so, and awaits a summons."

The surprise of the two detectives can not be described. They glanced at each other in absolute amazement. Mattie, however, was well pleased. He liked the turn the affair was taking. We all like to be right. We all like to be confirmed when we advance a theory, and it did appear as though Mattie's theory was being confirmed.

"How do you know all these facts?"

"I may know the man who is putting up the job."

"What job?"

"To hang me."

"Why does any one wish to hang you?"

"It is a part of the game."

"What game?"

"Send for the man who is at the bottom of the whole business, and I will open your eyes."

Again Mattie and Baily stepped into the adjoining room, and Mattie asked:

"What do you think of it now?"

"I am all done up."

"That man knows what he is about."

"He does."

"There is something under all this."

"There is, and we are on to it; and you can see now that in following my advice and arresting this man we developed matters."

"That is possible. What will you do now?"

"What do you suggest?"

"I would send for Alvarez."

"And confront him with this man?"

"Yes; we are to get great developments, I am certain."

"All right; I'm with you."

"We will send for him?"

"Yes."

"You do it."

Baily left the room, and Mattie returned to the presence of Kalley.

"We have determined to do as you wish."

"All right."

"And now, understand me," continued Mattie; "we are perfectly impartial in this matter."

"I am sorry for you two gentlemen."

"Why?"

"I will prove how you have been fooled."

"Possibly we have not been fooled as much as you think. Come, now; you have more to open up. Make a confidant of me."

"I will when the man arrives whom you have sent for."

"It will be better for you if you prepare me for what is to come."

"You will get it all time enough. We will all have lots of fun to-night—to-night!"

"I consider it very serious business."

"You will find it very funny business before we get through with it to-night."

While Mattie and the prisoner were talking, Baily proceeded to the hotel. He met Alvarez. The latter was waiting, and asked:

"Have you got your man?"

"We have."

"He is all broke up, I suppose?"

"You are mistaken. He is as cool as a cucumber."

"We will take some of the coolness out of him. That man will hang."

"He does not act like a man who thinks he is going to hang."

"I differ with you."

"How is that?"

"Since we have talked with the man he has thrown out some strange hints."

"He has?"

"Yes; and we dare not arrest him, or, rather, turn him over to the authorities, until we have better warrant."

"What better warrant do you want? He was the man who occupied the room adjoining where the murder was committed."

"He has not denied that."

Alvarez gave a start, and exclaimed:

"And you accused him?"

"Yes."

"It's strange—very strange. I will go with you and see the man."

CHAPTER XXIV.

ALVAREZ and Baily moved off in company, and on the way Alvarez again muttered:

"It's strange—very strange."

"What is so strange?"

"The fact that this man does not deny his identity."

"He is the coolest man I ever met."

"That is strange; but I see he is playing a deep game. He is acting under the advice of some one else."

"If he is, he is playing his part well."

"I fear the man may throw you off the track."

"You need not fear. I am going to the bottom of this affair."

"You are at the bottom now. A murder was committed. You know the motive, and you have the murderer in custody."

"So it would appear; but there are strange circumstances developing. You say it is strange. You are right; it is very strange. The actions of this man are very perplexing."

The two men reached the house. Baily left Alvarez in the front room, and entering the presence of his partner and the prisoner, he said:

"The man you desired to see is here to confront you."

"Let him enter."

Alvarez was shown into the room. He fixed his eyes on the prisoner, and for a few seconds the two men silently glared at each other, and it was Alvarez who first spoke. He said:

"So, we meet again?"

"Yes, we meet again," came the answer; and the prisoner spoke in a very suggestive tone.

"Wretch! I knew where you would land!"

"And you fully identify me?"

"Yes; you are Edward Kalley."

"You are mistaken."

Alvarez assumed a look of triumph, and said:

"Ah! that's your game, eh?" and turning to the two detectives, the man added:

"You see now why this man is so confident. He means to deny his identity, but I will prove it."

"Good enough! And you are my accuser?"

"I am not your accuser, but I know you are a guilty man."

"Of what am I guilty?"

"The murder of Essie Hinsdale."

The prisoner turned toward the two detectives, and said:

"Gentlemen, note every word that passes."

"We are listening."

"Is Essie Hinsdale dead?" demanded the prisoner, addressing Alvarez.

"You should know."

"Was that the body of Essie Hinsdale found in the room at the —— Hotel?"

"You can answer that."

"Ah, no! That is a question for you to answer. You have declared that Essie Hinsdale was murdered. You have declared it was her body that was found, and now I am asking you if you are sure she is dead—if you are sure it was her body that was found?"

Alvarez appeared confused, and said:

"When you are on trial I will answer that question with proof. I know the game you have been playing. I know the top and bottom of your scheme."

"I will never be tried, so you had better prove it now. If there is a trial for murder, you will be the accused."

"I will be the accused?"
"I feel certain you will be tried for murder."

The man Alvarez laughed, and the prisoner said:
"Gentlemen, you are noting this talk?"
"We are."
"Remember every word, please."

The detectives nodded, and the prisoner proceeding, said:
"Yes; if the girl at the hotel was murdered, you may be called upon to answer for two murderers."

"Indeed? Who is the second victim?"
"Well, there may be some inquiry as to the identity of the murderer of George Heath."

Again Alvarez laughed, and again he said:
"You are indeed cool."
"Let me tell you a tale."
"I am willing, if these gentlemen have the patience."

"I will answer for the gentlemen."

"How much you assume."

"I have a right. George Heath is dead?"
"Certainly."
"You were present when he died?"
"I was."
"Who besides you?"
"I am not bound to tell you."
"You will tell the court."
"I will, if ever called upon to do so."
"Where is Adele Heath?"

"She stands prepared to prove how great a villain you are."

"And Essie Hinsdale is dead?"
"I have every reason to believe that she is dead."

"If she is living I would have no motive in murdering the girl whose body was found at the — Hotel."

"Ah, this is all a farce."
"Is it?"
"It is. I am not bound to answer your questions."

"But you are my accuser."
"I am not."
"You gave the information on which I was arrested."

The man did not answer.

"I will give you a bit of advice: You had better order my release."

"I have nothing to do with your arrest or release."

"You deny that you gave the information which led to my arrest?"

"I may have told what I knew or suspected. The officers, I see, have followed up the clews, and no doubt they have obtained evidence that warranted your arrest."

"And you will not order my release?"
"I have nothing to do with it."
"I may make an accusation that will lead to your arrest."

"Of what will you accuse me?"
"The murder of George Heath?"

Alvarez laughed, and said in reply to Kalley's declaration:
"You can accuse me as soon as you choose."
"You will stand to you accusations against me?"
"I have not accused you."
"We will see. But one thing is certain: you identify me?"
"I do."

Kalley again turned to the detectives, and said:
"I ask you gentlemen to note every word that was said here."

"You did."

"I wish you to watch everything that occurs."

"We will."

"This man told you a certain tale. He put you on the track of finding the young man who occupied the room adjoining that where the dead body was found."

The detectives did not answer.

"You need not answer; but you know what I claim is true. I answer the description of that man. This fellow here has identified me. A new theory will be advanced to you later on, and that is why I wish you to note well everything that occurs. You are two smart young men, but you have been led off on a wild chase by this fellow, and I will prove it."

Alvarez turned to the two detectives, and said:
"Will you leave me alone with this fellow a few moments? I think I can force him to a confession."

The two detectives at once retired from the

room, and the moment they were gone, Alvarez said:

"Kalley, your game is up. You have played it well, but I have you fast and tight; and now I will make you a proposition: If you will return to Europe I will manage so you can escape; otherwise you will go to jail now, and you will hang as sure as your name is Kalley!"

Kalley laughed, and said:

"You are a cool rascal. Now let me tell you something. I have a proposition to make you: Stay just where you are in your scheme, and if there has been no real crime committed beyond the attempt to steal an estate, I will let you on you."

"Well, you are the coolest villain I ever met in all my life!"

"Why, man, there is a revelation to come right here, unless you own up, that will cause your hair to stand."

"You can not scare me."

"That woman Essie Hinsdale is well known. Her identity can be proven."

"Oh, no doubt you have a woman to represent Adele Heath; but I have you watched on that end of it."

"If George Heath is dead, his death will be traced down to you."

"Well, you have a cheek!"

"Will you stop short now?"

"I will not stop until I hang you."

"You had better call in the detectives."

"You refuse to take advantage of this opportunity?"

"No; I shall take advantage of it in a way you little dream."

"It is your last chance to escape."

"I shall never attempt to escape. I have got things too fine on you."

"This is a game of bluff."

"It is, eh?"

"It is."

"Let me see how well I know your scheme: You have played a dummy; it was well worked — a dummy to represent me—and you have your pipes all well laid. But you have only been watching one hand. There is another game being played—a game to circumvent you, and I will throw back your words and say this is your last chance."

"My last chance for what?"

"Your only chance to restore the fortune."

"It is my chance to see you go to jail."

"And you will so order?"

"I will."

"Good enough! Call back the officers."

Alvarez hesitated a moment. He evidently did not feel comfortable. He looked around, and then in a hesitating way, said:

"I would like to save trouble, and escape scandal and notoriety."

"Ah! you would?"

"Yes, I would; and there is a way to do it."

"How?"

The man lowered his voice to a whisper, and said:

"We will effect a compromise. You have got up a good scheme. You want some of the money in order to save trouble. I am willing to consider you."

"How?"

"I will pay you a certain sum of money."

"And what am I to do?" asked Kalley, in an eager tone.

"You are to sign certain papers and go to Europe."

"Will you let me see the papers?"

"No; you must sign them in blank."

"Will you tell me the nature of the papers?"

"I will tell you nothing. I have but one purpose: to avoid scandal and notoriety."

There came a strange smile to Kalley's face as he said:

"I will take my chances, you villain!"

"Hold! do not call names, or I may refuse to treat with you at all."

"I refuse to treat with you."

"You absolutely refuse to treat with me?"

"I do. Call in the officers."

CHAPTER XXV.

ALVAREZ appeared reluctant to call back the officers, and Kalley said:

"It's no use; you may as well call in the officers. Let them take me to the Tombs, and in less than an hour they will be after you."

"I fear nothing. I can prove my character and yours. I tell you, the proofs of your guilt are absolute."

"Call in the officers."

"You refuse to treat?"

"I've answered you a dozen times."

"You are young to die on the gallows."

"Oh, hold your nonsense! Call in the officers; if you don't, I will."

Alvarez stepped to the door; his back was to the prisoner. He called in the officers, and as they advanced he turned round, and then stood and gazed aghast, actually paralyzed—and no wonder. A sight met his gaze which under the circumstances, would have paralyzed any man. A most singular and marvelous change had taken place—a complete and absolute metamorphosis. The man Kalley had vanished in thin air, and where he had sat there sat an entirely different man. The two officers also looked amazed, and the three men all gazed aghast when the man who had undergone the change said:

"Gentlemen, it's all right. I told you to note everything that occurred, and now I ask that rascal there if he recognizes and identifies me?"

Alvarez stood and gazed in speechless amazement.

"Come, men," said Old Phenomenal, "speak. Who am I?"

The men did not speak.

"Gentlemen," said our hero, "you heard him positively identify me as Kalley. Who am I?"

"Who are you, indeed?" demanded Mattie.

"I am not Kalley; and as you gentlemen have made a mistake, of course I am at liberty to depart."

"Do not let him go!" Alvarez managed to articulate.

"We can not hold him," said Baily.

"Put the handcuffs on that man! You have the real murderer now!"

Baily looked toward Mattie. The latter appeared perplexed, but at length said:

"We had better hold the man."

"Gentlemen, do not come to any such decision. There is the man you should hold."

"We had better hold both of you," said Mattie.

"You can not hold me."

"We will."

"And that man?"

"We will hold him also."

"Let's hear what the doctor has to say," suggested Baily.

"Gentlemen, you know your duty. You have the proofs. There is the real murderer."

"It is an embarrassing position," said Mattie.

Old Phenomenal evidently had enjoyed himself to his heart's content. He did not propose to sit there and have these men holding an ante-mortem examination over him.

Suddenly he leaped to his feet, and in less than two seconds three men lay prostrate upon the floor, and the great detective quietly left the room and the house.

The three men were a discomfited-looking crew when they regained their feet and looked at one another. Mattie was the first to speak. He said:

"Well, this is a go!"

"You are satisfied, gentlemen, now, I trust?" said Alvarez.

Mattie passed a signal to his partner. Ideas were running through his head, and he said:

"I am satisfied we were served out in fine style."

"We were not looking for it," said Baily.

"That man is the confederate of the man Kalley."

"He has made a good point on you for future use."

"I will take care of that part of it."

"Would it not be well for you to open up the real facts, doctor?"

"You gentlemen do not appear to realize."

"We do realize that there is a mystery here. That man does not act like a cold-blooded criminal. There are evidently two sides to this case."

"We will find the real Kalley."

"One word, doctor: If you are up to any game, you are beaten, that's all. The man who downed us will prove too much for you."

"Gentlemen, I shall employ a man on this case who knows better how to act."

"Well, you had better do so. We are not employed by you."

"I am very much obliged to you, gentlemen, for having done your duty as far as you knew."

"Ah, thank you!"

He went away, and Baily and Mattie again were alone, and Mattie said:

"Well, Tom, we are a pair of ninnies. We are getting it in the neck every time."

"Oh, come off!"
"We are coming off. But what do you think of it?"
"What do you think of it?"
"I have an idea."
"Well, I've an idea. Let's hear yours, and see if we agree."
"The old man."
"The old man who was hanging around in the room where the dead girl lay?"
"You think there is something very deep under all this?"
"I was never so beat in all my life."
"Let us change our tactics."
"What shall we do?"
"Go straight and alone for this chameleon."
"How will we do it?"
"I have figured a bit."
"And what is your sum?"
"The old man had a point in letting the doctor run at large."
"That seems the explanation."
"Then the lad and the old man are working in together, as we at first supposed."
"Our road is clear."
"How?"
"We can at least catch the boy."
"What can we make if we do?"
"We can hold him."
"Well?"
"His mentor will look him up."
"Well?"
"We can then watch and run down the mentor."
"Your idea is a good one."
"It is the only thing we can do."
"This fellow Alvarez is a dead beat. When he left here, a little time ago, he was all broke up."
"He was—sure."
"The other man who traveled as Kalley walked off at his leisure."
"He did."
"Now, why should he assume the rôle of Kalley?"
"He had a purpose."
"Yes; and I have an idea as to what his purpose was. He knows what he is about, and I tell you I am on to it all."
"And what is your idea?"
"It is a double scheme of villainy. We are right to catch or run down either party. There is a big steal somewhere, and our first duty is to find that lad and hold him as a prisoner."
"We will do it."
"If we once get him we will get on to the man who is behind him."
"We had him here."
"We did, that is true; and, hang it! we've been knocked over like men of straw several times."
"I feel humiliated, Mattie."
"Humiliated! I am the most mortified man in New York. If the truth were known at head-quarters we would be laughed off the force."
"We will redeem ourselves."
"I trust we will."
"I do not trust that doctor."
"Nor I, now."
"We can pretend, however, to lay in with him. We can pretend to believe all he says, and get our information from both sides."
"What is your plan?"
"I have no set plan, but I will arrange one as I go along."
"You want to be very careful."
"I will."
"Do so; and ere to-morrow night we will have made some progress, you bet!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

HAVING run the rôle of Kalley, our hero proceeded to his lodgings. On the way he was joined by Eddie, who had been on the lay for him all the time.
"Well, Ed, anything new?"
"Nothing new."
"I've an idea, Ed."
"Go it."
"I think we might scare the woman into a confession."
"What is it you wish to establish?"
"I have an idea—a strong idea—that George Heath is alive."
"I am on deck every time."
"I've another idea. You must look out for Baily and Mattie. They are going for you."
"Oh, I will look out for them. And now, boss, I am going to bid you good-night."
"Where are you going?"

"I am on the trail of my life. I've an idea I can find out something about this missing George Heath. You can trust me?"
"I can, certainly."
"You know the old adage: 'Strike while the iron is hot.'"
"Well?"
"You had better not interfere with me tonight."
Al Stetson had great confidence in Eddie, and he determined to let him go.
Eddie did have an idea. He knew that Alvarez had been in the house with the two fellows Baily and Mattie, and he had made a calculation as to what he would do when he parted from his chief. He ran straight back toward the house where the remarkable interview described had occurred. He did not reach the house, however, before he came to a dead stand, and he dropped to a cover. He saw the man Alvarez. The latter had just left the house. Eddie started on his shadow, and he soon muttered.
"Just as I thought."
The lad had concluded that the doctor, after the interview, would go to the house of the woman Essie Hinsdale, and the direction the man took was a confirmation of his suspicion.
The doctor arrived opposite the house. A light was burning in the window. He uttered a signal whistle, and there came a return signal, and the doctor entered the house. Ed was close by; he shed his shoes, glided up the stairs, and reached the second floor just as the woman came from an adjoining room and joined the man who had signaled.
"I am so glad you have come," said the woman.
"Did you expect me?"
"No; but it is well you are here. I think I will have great news for you."
"What has happened?"
"That man who was here—"
"What of him?"
"He is a very devil!"
"I thought you did not fear him?"
"I thought so, but I've changed my mind. He is a terrible man to play against. I will have to call in your aid."
"Well, what can I do?"
"He will come here again. You must be ready for him."
The woman meditated a moment, and then said:
"You assign me too great a task."
"All depends upon getting rid of that man, or he will beat us."
"I have thought of that; but I tell you he is a terrible man."
"You could allure him."
"I will think the matter over."
"Remember, we have succeeded: everything is all right; and if we can get rid of two parties, we have no more to do; the game is all our own."
"You have met that man?"
"Yes."
"He got the better of you?"
"He did. He played a great card on me to-night."
"Tell me about it."
The doctor told all that had occurred, and when he had concluded, the woman said:
"It's strange that he should be able to make up for Kalley so as to deceive you."
"He did; but you must remember I have never had any real intimacy with Kalley."
"If he can deceive you, I should be able to deceive him."
"I think you can."
At that moment there came an interruption, and the woman said:
"Now we will get some news."
There had come a signal from the street. Eddie, who was on the watch and listening, had not heard the signal; but from the woman's words he knew that something was up, and he got on to it when the woman stated:
"That is Alfred."
"Well?"
"He brings some news."
The woman went across the room and made an answering signal, and Eddie got away.
A few minutes passed, and the young man Alfred ascended the stairs. He entered the room, and Eddie was back at his place. The boy did not appear to know what the sentiment of danger meant. He was taking chances that were really dangerous ones.
Our readers in merely reading about the acts of our little hero can not fully realize the risk that he ran. Very terrible tragedies had oc-

curred in New York. They are occurring every day and night, and the number of detectives who have been dropped out has been considerable. The strangest and most tragic incidents are hourly occurring, and while we write these lines, schemes, counter-schemes, plots, counter-plots, and terrible tragedies are taking place that will only be known when they culminate, and then the real incidents underlying them will never be known.

As the lad got back to his post he saw Alfred take a seat, and the woman, in an eager tone, asked:

"What news do you bring?"

"I've succeeded."

The woman's face lighted up with a gleam of triumph, and she said, turning to Alvarez:

"Can you not guess?"

"I am not a guesser."

"We've found her."

"Found whom?"

"Adele."

The doctor gave a start.

"Yes; we've found her. You hear what Alfred says."

"Tell me about it."

"Give me a moment to take breath."

It was an odd scene presented at that moment; and a little later Alfred said:

"Two days ago I saw a lady in the street. She was veiled. You had set me to run down the girl. I've been following veiled ladies for weeks, and only to be disappointed, until to-night."

"You have found Adele?" demanded the doctor.

"I have."

"You are sure of her identity?"

"I am—yes. As I told you, I met a veiled lady. I followed her to a house on — Street. I've been watching that house ever since. Tonight my vigil was rewarded. I saw a lady come to the window. I had a good look at her, and it was Adele Heath. I will risk my life on her identity."

"Where is the house?"

"It is a little two-story frame house on — Street, near the river. A well-known man lives there, and she is either a guest or a boarder; but Adele Heath resides in that house. I saw her to-night. There is no doubt as to her identity."

"This is great news," said Alvarez.

"It is," responded the woman, with a triumphant look on her face.

CHAPTER XXVII.

EDDIE overheard all that had passed, and he also had his little smile of triumph, as he muttered:

"I reckon my head was level when I followed a bird's advice that whispered in my ear."

Alfred told some more facts, and after receiving high commendation, returned to an upper room in the house, and Alvarez and the woman were once more alone. Eddie had a narrow squeak of it, as the young man left the room unexpectedly; but the lad got to a cover, and was back again in a moment to listen to what occurred. He had been there but a minute, however, when suddenly there came an outcry. It came from up the stairs. Eddie dashed over to the lower hall, Alvarez and the woman rushed from the room, and Alfred came down all excitement.

"What is the matter?" demanded the doctor.

"I was coming down-stairs to tell you something that I had forgotten, when I will swear I saw the shadow of a man."

"Where was he?"

"At the foot of the stairs here."

Alvarez drew a pistol, turned up the gas, and commenced a search. He passed into all the rooms on the floor, and then descended the stairs. He at length returned upstairs, and said:

"Alfred, you were mistaken."

"I must have been; but I thought I saw the shadow of a man."

We will not tell what a narrow chance of it Eddie had; but he did not leave the house. He was determined to chance it out, and learn, if he could, the plans of the man and woman; and, in spite of all that had occurred, he was speedily at his post again.

After entering the room the man and woman had exchanged a few words, and Eddie was on deck just in time to hear the woman say:

"I fear there was a man there."

"It is utterly impossible, Essie, that ther-

could have been. Alfred is a nervous young fellow, and only imagines he saw a shadow.

"Suppose there was some one listening?"

"Who could it be?"

"That man; and he would have overheard Alfred's disclosure."

"You can rest easy; there was no man in the house."

The woman suddenly leaped to the door and flung it wide open. There was no one there.

Eddie had been like a mouse in his quickness.

"Will you give up that idea?"

"I am so nervous."

"Essie, if Alfred's information is true, we are all right. In the first place, one very important fact is established."

"And what is that?"

"The girl is not under the protection of that man Kalley."

"We must act at once."

"No need. We have got her located, and can prepare to take her."

"How long will you wait?"

"Only until to-morrow night. I will make some arrangements during the coming day to secure possession of her."

"If we secure her we are all right."

"Not at all. We will not be all right until we have made away with those two men—Kalley and the man who has been on our track. I will take care of Kalley, and you must dispose of the other man."

"I will do the best I can."

After a little more talk Alvarez departed. Eddie lay low and left the house after him, and he muttered:

"This will do for to-night. To-morrow I will have a heap of business on hand."

Eddie retired to his lodgings. He found the great detective asleep. The latter, who always slept with one eye open, made sure it was his little pal, and when the latter said: "We will talk in the morning," Old Phenomenal turned over and soon fell off into a sound sleep, leaving Eddie to keep the one eye open.

On the following morning our hero and his little pal held their talk.

"Well, Ed, what did you make out?"

"I want to ask you a question."

"Go it."

"You think the girl Adele is alive?"

"Yes."

"She is not in their possession?"

"I do not think she is."

"Would it be an advantage for you to have her under your protection?"

"I should say it would. What are you getting at, young fellow?"

"I am getting at something, that is sure. I've an idea."

"Well?"

"I believe they are both alive."

"Have you any proof?"

"Dead proof as to one of them, and before this day is over I will be able to put you in communication."

"What do you mean?"

Eddie related all that had occurred, and all that he had overheard; and when he had concluded, Old Phenomenal said:

"This is the best piece of work yet, Ed."

"I think so."

"And you have located the house?"

"I have."

"What is your plan now?"

"I will see this girl."

"You will?"

"I will. It will be two girls talking together."

The great detective meditated a moment, and then said:

"I don't know, Ed, but it will be a good scheme."

It was about eleven o'clock in the day when a young girl very poorly clad, looking like a beggar, appeared in the vicinity of the little two-story house on — Street, near the Hudson River shore. She had found the little house, and had walked up and down before it several times, and was muttering to herself, when suddenly she exclaimed:

"Halloo! there he is. I thought so. And now to get rid of him."

A young man, whom the girl recognized as the young fellow Alfred, was lurking around in the vicinity of the house she had been watching.

It was a deserted neighborhood. The houses were far apart. Some were occupied, others were vacant, and there were vacant lots between, and a great stretch of dump-lands. It

was on the latter where the young man was located. He was sitting behind a big boulder, and ever and anon was peeping out and looking toward the little wooden house.

The girl produced a bag and hook, and wandered around picking up scraps here and there, and finally turned into the lot and approached the spot where the young man Alfred was laying low, when she appeared to discover him. Suddenly she came to a halt, and stood and gazed at him.

"What are you standing there looking at me for, anyhow?"

"I guess I know."

"What do you mean, you dirty-faced little wretch?"

"I've seen you before. I know you."

"You know me?"

"Yes, I do; and I'm going to call a policeman."

"You impudent thing, what do you mean?"

"The police are looking for you."

"The police are looking for me?"

"Yes, they are; and if you don't give me something, I'll holler and call 'em around."

"How dare you?"

"Oh, it's all right; you can put on airs; but I know you. You've been around here before."

The young man arose and advanced toward the girl in a threatening manner, when the latter raised her hook and exclaimed:

"Ah! don't you come near me! I am not afraid of you, and if you don't give me something I'll holler."

"What do you mean?"

"You are a sneak-thief. You're lying around here for a chance; but you won't make anything. I'm watching you, I am. You were around here before. You are the man who robbed the house on Forty-eighth Street. I saw you around, and I'll tell the police if you don't pay me something."

"I'll give you nothing," he said.

"You go away from here quick!"

"I'll do nothing of the kind. I'll hand you over to the police."

"You'll hand me over to the police?"

"I will."

"I dare you! There comes a policeman now."

The young man gave a start.

"Ah! I see you are frightened almost to death, and now you clear out, or I'll call the cop."

The young man turned pale. Alvarez had said that Alfred was a nervous youth. He was.

"Here, I'll give you a dollar," he said.

"I don't want a dollar."

There had been no cop in sight when the girl spoke; but at that moment a cop did appear, when suddenly the girl dropped her bag and hook, leaped forward, and seized the young man, and commenced to shout. The youth struggled, and, to his surprise, he found the rag-picker girl as strong as a man.

The cop came up.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Catch him!" cried the girl. "He's a sneak-thief."

The cop started after the young man, and the girl sat down and had a quiet laugh.

Our readers have already discerned the identity of the supposed girl, and Eddie said, as he laughed:

"That was a good scheme. I've got rid of him."

The occurrences we have described occurred directly opposite the little white house, and our young hero had observed, even while struggling with Alfred, that the people in that house were watching the struggle from the windows. After the cop had gone away a lady came to the door of the house and beckoned the supposed girl to go over. Eddie obeyed, and the lady asked:

"What was the matter?"

"I can not tell you, madame."

"Why not?"

"Will you give me a piece of bread?"

"Are you hungry?"

"If I were not hungry why would I ask for bread?"

"Go down to the basement door."

Eddie obeyed, descending a steep course of stone steps, and a moment later the lady descended and let him enter. Once in the kitchen, the supposed beggar was supplied with a piece of bread. Eddie sat eating it, when a young lady with a fair face and a gentle manner entered the kitchen. Eddie appeared to be surprised. He dropped the bread from his hands and just sat and stared. The girl appeared surprised, and the lady, who evidently owned the house, exclaimed:

"What is the matter with you, my girl?"

"Nothing," was the answer, as Eddie stopped down, picked up his piece of bread, and commenced eating again.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"WHAT is the matter, girl?" asked the young lady.

"What is your name?" demanded Eddie.

"What difference does it make to you? Why do you ask?"

"I've seen you before."

"You have seen me before?"

"Yes. What is your name?"

"My name is Emma Smith."

The beggar pretended to be very much amused, and said:

"Yes, yes! Smith is the name people always take when they do not wish to tell their real names."

The fair girl betrayed signs of nervousness, and asked:

"What do you mean, girl?"

"Who is that lady?"

Eddie pointed toward the lady of the house.

"Did you ever see me before?" said the lady.

"No; I never saw you before. I've seen this lady before, I am sure."

"How strangely she acts!" said the elder lady.

"Will you tell me who that lady is?"

"She is my friend."

"Your real, true friend?"

"Yes; my real, true friend."

"How is she your friend?"

"What on earth does the girl mean?" cried the elder lady; and she added: "Let's hurry her out to the street."

"You had better not."

"When will you tell us what you mean?"

"I will when I am sure."

"Sure of what?"

"Sure that you are indeed this lady's friend."

"Well, I declare!" ejaculated the elder lady.

"You had better tell me."

"Tell you what?"

"All you know."

"Know about what?"

"This lady."

"Well, if I ever heard such nonsense!"

"It is not nonsense. I know what I am about."

"You had better tell me just what you mean."

"I will when I am sure you are her friend; or you can go out of the room and I will tell her."

"Tell whom?"

"The young lady."

"Do not leave the room," said the younger lady.

"Then you can trust that woman?"

"I can."

"She knows all about you?"

"Yes; she has known me from my infancy."

"Do not speak another word to that girl until you know what she means!" exclaimed the elder woman.

"You will be sorry if you do not hear what I have to tell."

"What have you to tell?"

"You saw me fight with that young man."

"I did."

"Did you ever see that young man before?"

The young lady betrayed even greater nervousness as she answered:

"I saw him over in the lot."

"You do not remember ever having seen him before that?"

"No."

"He was watching you."

"But why was he watching me?"

"Because he has recognized you."

"Who am I?"

"You said your name was Smith. That is not your name."

"What is my name?"

"That man knows."

"What is my name?"

"Shall I tell?"

"Yes."

"Does that lady know your real name?"

"She does."

"Then I will tell you your name: it is Adele Heath."

It was a sight when the beggar-girl mentioned the name. The elder lady stood and gazed

aghast, and the younger one acted as though she were about to faint.

A moment passed. The two women exchanged glances, and the elder one finally murmured:

"This is terrible!"

"It's all right," said Eddie.

"Will you explain what you mean?"

"You have enemies."

"Who are my enemies?"

"Doctor Alvarez is your enemy."

"Who are you?" demanded the young lady, seizing the pretended beggar-girl by the shoulder.

"I am your friend."

"You are my friend?"

"Yes. I drove that young man away."

"Who is that young man?"

"He is the spy of Doctor Alvarez. They have run you down; they mean to kidnap you. Now you know that I am your friend."

"And who are you?"

"You do not deny that your name is not Emma Smith?"

"Why are you here?"

"As your friend."

"And who are you?"

"Look and see," came the answer; and there followed a transformation scene.

The elder and younger woman gazed aghast, and it was some time before either could speak; but at length the elder said:

"What does all this mean?"

"I know all about this young lady."

"You do?"

"I do; and you appear surprised."

"We are surprised. Will you explain?"

"I will not, but her real friend will."

"Who is her real friend?"

"A great detective."

"What does it all mean?" exclaimed the younger lady.

"You know you are in peril?"

"At whose hands?"

"The man who is seeking to steal your fortune. You must go with me."

"Where will you take me?"

"To meet the great detective."

"This is all very strange. It is the most remarkable adventure of my life; but I will go with you."

"You shall not go!" said the elder lady.

"I am now satisfied I have been dogged and followed for weeks."

"You have," said Eddie. "Your enemies are on your track. If they once get you under their control, your life is not safe. They mean to steal your fortune. I do not know how much you suspect of the scheme to rob you, but a great game is being played to rob you of your fortune. Another woman claims to be Adele Heath. Come; I have told you enough. You must go with me."

"She shall not go!"

"Then, if evil comes, you will be responsible," said Eddie.

"It is a game to trap her."

"Her enemies certainly would not invite you. It is open day. I will take you to the presence of the great detective. He will tell you all; tell you how he happened to hear about you, and how he became interested in your case. He will tell you facts that you do not know. If you do not go with me you will regret it all the rest of your life."

"I am resolved to go," said Adele.

"Do not fail," returned Eddie; and he resumed his rag-picker garb. He held a few moments' further talk and disappeared from the kitchen. He went to the street, munching his piece of bread.

Eddie had given Adele and her friend full instructions, and he knew he had time to go and meet Old Phenomenal. He proceeded to his lodgings. The great detective awaited him. Eddie told his tale.

"Lad, you have done well."

"Yes, and I have earned the right to go on with my game."

"You shall."

"We will go now and meet the ladies. We have made a great advance."

"We have."

"That girl must not go back to her present time."

"We will see. Go, now."

Eddie dropped into a new disguise and went to the street. He went direct to the place where he was to meet the two ladies. They were on hand, and in a few moments Al Stetson appeared. He was introduced. He held a long talk with the elder lady. He succeeded in

convincing her as to all the facts, and she accompanied him to his lodgings. In his rooms he told the two ladies a long tale and fully established his own identity, and it was arranged that Adele should not return to the house. The elder lady did return. The latter had been Adele's nurse. She had later on married. At present she was a widow. In a certain moment of peril and darkness Adele had come accidentally upon her old nurse, and had claimed her protection. After the elder woman, Mrs. Smith, had gone, our hero held a long talk with Adele. He asked the lovely girl a great many questions.

"What do you know," he asked, "about the death of your brother?"

"Nothing. I have the word of Doctor Alvarez alone."

"Where did your brother first meet him?"

"My brother was a monomaniac. He had an idea that he had consumption. He spent a great deal of money consulting specialists. He met this man Alvarez; the man won his confidence. The man prevailed upon my brother to make a trip. They were gone some weeks. They went to the southern part of California. I received a dispatch one day to go to a town in California. The dispatch stated that my brother had been taken with hemorrhages—that he was dying. I started at once. I reached the place eight days after the receipt of the dispatch. The doctor met me, and with tears told me my brother was dead. I had no reasons to doubt or suspect the man's statements. I was taken sick; the man took care of me. He was like a brother. In good time I recovered, and we came East. He showed me my brother's will; told me how he had been appointed executor and guardian. I had no reason to doubt his word. And so matters went until I received an anonymous letter. It was delivered to me by hand. The letter stated that my brother was not dead; that the doctor was a fraud, and intended to rob us of our fortune. I would have shown the letter to the doctor—I so intended to do—when a most thrilling and startling incident occurred."

CHAPTER XXIX.

OLD PHENOMENAL knew most of the facts the girl was reciting, but he was deeply interested. Adele was a charming girl. She was very pretty; indeed, might be called beautiful. She was a bright, brave-faced girl, and a most interesting reciter.

"Proceed," he said, "and tell me all."

"As I told you, I did not think much of the anonymous letter. I had perfect confidence in the doctor. I believed him to be my friend. On our return from California he took me to his home. A lady whom he introduced as his cousin was his housekeeper. I saw but little of the lady. She appeared to have conceived a dislike for me, and I kept my rooms. The doctor had so ordered, he stated, because of my health. My meals were sent to me.

"When I received this letter I started to go to his office. I reached the door and heard loud talking. I would have run back to my room—it was at night—but I heard my own name mentioned. An impulse I could not restrain caused me to stand still. Then the voices became lower. I stepped nearer the door, and unconsciously bent my ear to the key-hole. Having heard my name mentioned, I was anxious to learn why I should be the cause of a quarrel, and so I little dreamed of the terrible words I was to overhear.

"The woman appeared to be weeping, and I heard her say:

"You must forgive me, Isidor, for having suspected you."

"I then heard the man say:

"Essie, I am hurt. How could you ever suspect me of being unfaithful to you! No, no; I love you as I love my own life."

"When I heard these words a suspicion flashed through my mind. I heard the woman ask:

"What will you do? Why not poison the girl at once and have done with it?"

"What answer did the man make?"

"The man said:

"It is not necessary to kill her. We can remove her from sight as we have her brother. We can make it appear as we desire, and not take her life. We will not take life unless it is absolutely necessary."

"If you let the girl live, she will also be a menace to you," said the woman."

"You are sure you heard the words as you repeat them?"

"I am; and I thought I should die right there."

"Did she declare her motive?"

"I heard a long talk between them, and learned that they determined to rob me of my fortune."

"Did they disclose how they meant to do it?"

"Yes; the scheme you have developed was the one they discussed."

"This woman was to represent you?"

"Yes."

"And what were they to do with you?"

"The doctor said he could destroy my mind—turn me into a driveling idiot."

"What a terrible scheme of rascality!"

"I heard the whole plot discussed, and at that moment a terrible suspicion crossed my mind."

"What was the suspicion?"

"I suspected that my brother was not dead."

"And—"

"That they were seeking to turn him into a driveling idiot. Indeed, they may have succeeded."

"You had no proof of your brother's death?"

"Only what this man told me."

"Have you any suspicion as to the identity of your anonymous correspondent?"

"No."

"What did you do?"

"I returned to my room, trembling with fear, but resolved to escape from that house."

"Did you do so at once?"

"No; I made a play for my life. I suddenly discovered a courage and determination in my own disposition I had never before suspected. It is possible that the knowledge of my great peril developed the courage."

"Yes, it is so; and it is well you had the quality to fall back upon. And what did you do? Did you ever show the man the letter?"

"I did not. I treated him as though I suspected nothing. Indeed, there was no change in my demeanor. I waited a chance to escape, and at length it came. The doctor was called away, and that same night I stole forth from his house. I had a little money, and I determined to go into concealment for awhile, and then go to California and investigate the circumstances of my brother's death. A week later I was in the street when I met Mrs. Smith. I told her my story; I went to her home with her. The trouble preyed upon my mind. I became ill. I had just recovered and had determined to go to California, and would have started within a week, but the incidents of today occurred, and now I am subject to your advice."

"You are a wise and sensible girl. And let me tell you, I believe your brother lives."

There came a sad look to the girl's eye as she said:

"As an idiot?"

"I do not believe he has carried out his fiendish design yet. I think you have everything to hope. But we will see. I am on that man's track, and will run him down. He can not escape me, and I think I will get on to his secret when he least expects it. I am gaining ground on him very fast."

As our readers will remember, by his ingenious device Eddie sent the fellow running like a deer. The man discovered that the officer was on his track, and he had a narrow escape. He went straight to a place where he was to report to Alvarez. He found the doctor awaiting him, and he said:

"I've had a narrow escape."

"How is that?"

Alfred told his story.

The doctor meditated a moment, and then said:

"You confirmed your original suspicion?"

"I saw the girl again to-day."

"Where?"

"At the window."

"You located her room?"

"I did."

"How many people are there in the house?"

"I can see but two women—an elderly woman and the girl Adele."

"Where does the old woman sleep?"

"That I can not tell to a certainty, but I suspect she uses the rear room and the girl the front one."

"It is an old, dilapidated building?"

"Yes."

"You say the neighborhood is sparsely settled?"

"Yes, on that particular street. It is down

near the river. Further up, and on the streets running north and south, there are many houses—large tenement houses or flats."

"Did that policeman see you well enough to fully identify you if he should see you again?"

"I can not tell; I think not."

"And how about the rag-picker? What is your theory?"

"I think there has been a sneak-thief in that neighborhood. I think the girl didn't identify me; but, seeing me hanging around, concluded I was the thief."

"I do not like the incident, but we will see about it. You meet me to-night and we will arrange for a little scheme I shall carry out. In the meantime I will complete my arrangements."

Alvarez went to complete his arrangements, and Al Stetson, with a feeling of triumph in his heart, went to call on Kelley. He found the young man, who had strictly obeyed orders, and he was glad to see the officer, and asked:

"When will this embargo on me be removed?"

"Pretty soon, I reckon."

Our hero repeated certain incidents and developments, and then said:

"I have a great surprise for you."

"Is it a pleasant surprise?"

"I reckon it will prove so."

"I am anxious."

"I have made a capture."

"You will not tell me that you have found George Heath?"

"No; not quite as good as that; but I have found his beautiful sister."

Kelley gave a start, and ejaculated:

"Is it possible? Where did you find her?"

"That does not matter; but she's now under my care and protection, and I have told her of the obligation she is under to you."

"I did not expect you to do that."

"I did it on my own responsibility, and I will tell you now she has fully confirmed every word you told me."

"How fortunate, under all the circumstances, everything has turned out so far!"

"Yes; and we will beat this great conspiracy, and we will owe our success to you alone."

"But you were already in the scheme."

"I never could have got on to the real facts if it had not been for you. Indeed, your interest in the affair let to the incidents which, as we know, brought me into the case."

"When am I to see this girl? As a friend of her brother, I am very anxious to make her acquaintance."

"In good time you shall meet her. And now, having found the girl, we will carry on our search for her brother, George Heath."

"If you find him, we settle the matter."

"We do, without any publicity, and that is my purpose."

"Have you any clews?"

"Not yet; but I have a genius on the shadow—a wonder—and if he fails we may as well give up the job."

Alvarez, as stated, went to make his arrangements, and later he called to talk a little further with the woman Essie Hinsdale. Upon meeting her, he said:

"All goes well. We will have the girl to-night, and if we could only get rid of that fellow who is the terror we would be all right."

"What will you do with the girl?"

"Bring her here for to-night."

"The terror comes here at will."

"Well?"

"He may come to-night and find the girl here."

"I think not. I've let Alfred lay on the lookout. And now, a great deal depends upon you."

"That man may come at any moment, and I am ready for him; I am courageous now; I will strike; but the presence of the girl will complicate matters."

"She will only remain here one day and night. I have no other place to take her at present."

There came a strange smile to the face of the doctor as he said:

"You do not know my game."

CHAPTER XXX.

WHILE the other parties involved in the incidents which make up our narrative were busy arranging their plans, our little hero, Eddie, was not idle. The lad was arranging for a great game; and his only motive was one of revenge and a love of fun.

It was the midnight following the incidents we have related, when a man appeared at the corner near the little frame house. He stood and waited for some time, when a second figure appeared in the person of a man who approached with a steady step.

"Is that you, Alger?" came the question from the first man.

"Yes."

"Where is your comrade?"

"He is at hand."

"Have you given instructions?"

"Not yet."

"Why not?"

"I have not had the house pointed out to me."

"We will walk down the street."

The two men did walk down the street. They passed the little house, and one of them said:

"That is the house."

"It is easy to get in there."

"Certainly. What more instructions do you want?"

"No more. I will now go."

"That is good. Your pay will be ready when the girl is safely delivered. And you are to make no explanation to any one."

"Oh, you can depend upon me!"

The two men separated, and the one who had received his instructions proceeded along to the higher street, and there met a pal.

"It's an easy job," he said.

"So much the better. And the pay?"

"No trouble about that; it's pay on delivery."

It was just three minutes after two o'clock when two men appeared in front of the little frame house, and, after looking up and down the street, one of them said:

"The road is clear."

The third man passed them.

"Is all ready?" came the question.

"All is ready."

"You will remain here on the watch?"

"Sure; but it should not take over ten minutes."

"Not a minute longer. It will be the old signal?"

"It will."

In less time than it takes to tell it, the two men climbed to the roof of the porch. A moment they listened. All was still. Deftly one of them raised the window-sash, which was not fastened, and silently he crawled through into the room. The second man waited outside, and after a short interval the first man came to the window from within the room, and whispered:

"It's all easy; the gal is here, and sleeps like a top."

Again there passed an interval, when there came a strange scene. The man who had entered the room again appeared at the window, and in his arms he carried the form of a girl. The figure of the girl was handed down from the low roof of the porch. The men followed, and they started across the open lot, bearing their burden; and, strange to say, the girl made no noise nor attempted any struggle.

The men chuckled as they lifted the form of the bound girl into the carriage. They followed themselves, the driver mounted his box, and one of the men said:

"That was the neatest job we ever worked."

"You are right."

"Alger, I've an idea."

"Well?"

"We don't know what we are up to."

"Bah! Are you weakening?"

"No; but signal Billy to come to a halt. We want to talk."

"Go it."

The carriage was brought to a halt, and the man Alger said:

"Now, what is it?"

"We are going too fast."

"What do you mean?"

"We do not know what we are giving away."

"I think I catch on."

"There may be bigger money in it than we think."

"That idea did run through my mind."

"Suppose we hold the gal until we find out, and take the gal to the rendezvous?"

"Yes."

"We will have Mister Man meet us there."

"I see."

"We will say we took bigger chances than we expected."

"I see."

"We will make a big demand. If he don't come down we will say that we will hold the prize until we find out who are on the other side."

"You are a genius."

"How does it strike you?"

"It's big."

"Then that is our game?"

"Yes."

"And if he comes down all right, we will turn her over."

"That's the way to work it."

"Then you skip here, and I will drive on. One of the men left the coach and started to go to the house where the captive was to have been taken. He arrived near the house, and gave the preconcerted signal, and it was answered, and from out the darkness stepped a man.

"Is that you, Alger?"

"I am here."

"Did you succeed?"

"Walk with me; I've something to say."

The man Alvarez started to walk with Alger, and he said:

"Now explain."

"We were watched."

"By whom?"

"I do not know; but we did not dare drive here."

"Oh, I see. And where is the girl?"

"We have her all right."

"Did you not take precautions to throw the spics off your trail?"

"Yes."

"Then what is the matter?"

"We can not tell that we succeeded."

"And what do you want me to do?"

"Come with me."

"No need for all this circumlocution. You fellows are up to some game."

"I am not."

"Then why not act and deliver the girl?"

"We might lose after winning, if we deliver; that is all we agreed to do."

"This is all nonsense, and contrary to contract; but I will go with you."

"That is all there is to do."

The two men proceeded, and soon arrived in front of a house where all the blinds were closed, and where all looked dark.

"She is here."

The two men entered the house, and in a room where there was an appearance of a club bar sat Alger's pal. He was all smiles and very pleasant when Alvarez entered.

"What does all this mean?" demanded the doctor.

"It's all right, doctor."

"But not according to contract, and I shall cut down the pay one half."

"You will?"

"I will."

"I am sorry you said that."

"Why?"

"It changes things."

"How?"

"You break your contract."

"No; you fellows have broken your contract."

"The contract is off, doctor. Yes, on your own proposition."

"What are you rascals up to, anyhow?"

"Nothing. You have declared the contract off. We are agreed. We will not detain you, doctor; I reckon we can make a bargain in another direction."

"Will you tell me just what you mean?"

"I will make it plain."

"Do so."

"If you want the girl, you will make a new contract; the old one is off."

"You are talking now like a fool."

"You agreed to pay so much money; you have since said you would not pay it. That breaks the contract. If we deal now it will be on a new basis."

"Deliver the girl to me, and I will pay the original sum agreed upon."

"Oh, no!"

"What do you mean?"

"I've made myself plain, I think. If you want the girl, it shall be a new deal."

"You mean to take advantage of me?"

"Not at all; we did our part and you kicked; that released us; and now it's a new deal or no deal."

"You have the girl?"

"Yes."

"Deliver her, and I will pay you the original sum named."

"Not to-night."

"How much do you demand?"

"Five times the sum originally agreed upon."

"Man, you are crazy!"

"All right; do not deal with a crazy man, doctor; you may be right."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE doctor saw that he had been tricked. He knew the men well whom he was dealing with, and when too late he fell to the fact that he had made a mistake and had played into their hands.

"Come, boys," he said; "I see your game; let's come to a fair understanding."

"We have made a reasonable demand."

"I will double the original sum named."

"We have put our price; it is your fault we have changed it."

"You did not fulfill the original contract."

"Circumstances prevented; we will fulfill the new one."

"I will double the amount first named. It is an unreasonable demand; but you have done well, and I will stand it."

"I have fixed the sum."

"See here, I treble the amount."

"Oh, you are coming up all right; but not one cent less."

"It's a big sum for a small service of three hours."

"We will judge of that. But the girl is here," said Crummie, coming again to the point.

"She will be delivered without any words?"

"Yes; we will get right in the carriage with you and drive straight to the house."

"Do so, and you shall have the money."

"We have the bulge now; you will have it then."

"You do not trust me?"

"In our business we can not trust any one. We deal for cash."

"You fellows have the advantage."

"Now—yes."

"I will accede to your terms; but there must be no more fooling."

"I tell you what we will do: You go and have the money ready; we will appear at your house with the girl, and you need not pay until she is at your door."

"I accept that."

"Then it's a go?"

"Yes."

Alvarez departed, and the two men who had played the game executed a dance.

"A lucky thought, Crummie, old man."

"Yes; but we did not strike high enough. There is a big game under all this."

"Will you make another strike?"

"No; we have done well enough. But I've an idea. We will deliver the girl as we have agreed."

"Good enough."

"We will get that money."

"Well, what then?"

"We will steal the gal on our own hook."

"It's a good scheme."

"We will make him come down heavy next time."

"We've got him pretty heavy this time."

"Yes; but we will take him very heavy next time. I tell you there is a big game under all this."

"Call up the carriage."

A few moments later the carriage appeared at the door.

The captive was taken down and put in the carriage, bound and gagged, and the carriage was driven to the house occupied by the woman Essie Hinsdale. Within the later house was the man Alvarez. He was excited, and paced the floor, and the woman shared his nervousness.

"Will they fail you?" she at length asked.

"I can not tell; they have played me a great game already."

"I dread the outcome of this night."

"It will all be well. When once I have the girl in my possession, I can defy them."

"They are here," suddenly cried the woman, as she bent her ear in a listening attitude. "I hear a carriage coming."

"Your ears are good."

"Listen; it is at the door."

The man left the room and ran down the stairs. Alger was at the door when he opened it.

"Have you brought your prisoner?"

"Yes."

"Bring her in at once."

"We have some preliminaries to settle."

"You forget you imperil my interests and your own."

"How?"

"Some one may be on the watch."

"We can settle matters in a moment. It's the money I want."

"The money is ready."

"Give it to me, and the prisoner shall be delivered to you."

The doctor handed the man a roll of bills.

"The amount is here?"

"It is."

"If you are deceiving me, all the worse for you."

"Every penny agreed upon between us is there."

A few moments later the form of a girl was carried into the house.

The prisoner was wrapped in shawls; her head was covered. She was carried to the front room on the second floor. The men who had brought her went away in the carriage, and the doctor and Essie Hinsdale were alone with their prize.

The doctor advanced to his victim, removed the wrappings, and started back with a curse as he exclaimed:

"Great Caesar! tricked at last!"

He disclosed the face of a girl, but it was not Adele Heath. The girl was bound and gagged. The man and the woman stood and gazed aghast, and finally the man said, in a low, grinding tone:

"This is a nice trick."

The woman went to him, and whispered:

"Hold! do not speak so loud. It may all be a mistake, after all."

"How—mistake?"

"They may have captured the wrong girl."

"No; it is a trick. I have been robbed."

"Alfred will be here in a moment."

"What does he know about it?"

"He knows all about it."

"How comes that?"

"I feared a trick. I sent him to watch. He will know whether or not they brought the girl from the right house. The victim does not know where she is. We can return her to the vicinity of her home and let her go. She can never identify us or the place to which she has been brought, if we manage it right."

"But we have lost Adele."

"We can not tell yet. It is my idea that a very funny mistake has occurred; we can rectify it."

"But I have paid those scoundrels."

"Never mind; we will rectify the mistake. It does not matter as much as you think; and here is Alfred."

The young man entered the room. He was led to an adjoining room, and the doctor asked:

"Were you watching those men?"

"I was."

"Did they go to the right house?"

"They did."

"And you saw them bring the girl forth?"

"I did."

"Then it is a trick," said the doctor.

"How?"

"They have not brought Adele here. They changed prisoners when they went to that other house, and they have my money."

Essie said:

"You have the girl here."

"Yes, and what will I do with her?"

"You can find out if it is a trick or not."

"How?"

"Force the girl to tell."

"And in so doing, give her a clew as to our identity?"

"Not necessarily."

"How can we avoid it?"

"You can claim you rescued her. You can go into the room in disguise. She never knew a thing more than she does now. Stop; think a moment. You can make up a tale to tell the girl."

The doctor worked a change in his appearance. He then entered the room. The girl lay in the same position on the sofa as when first placed there when carried into the room. The doctor removed the gag from her mouth, and asked:

"Who are you?"

The girl struggled to speak, but the gag appeared to have momentarily paralyzed her. The doctor waited, and at length repeated his question.

"Who are you?"

"Why have I been abducted from my home?"

"Will you tell me who you are?"

"Unbind me, and I will answer your question."

"No, I can not unbind you."

"Then you are responsible for this outrage?"

"I know nothing about it. I am a physician."

I was told an insane woman would be brought here to me—a woman violently insane. You do not look as though you were insane. I think there has been a mistake made, and that is why I ask you who you are."

"What is the name of the insane person who was to have been brought here?"

"I do not know."

"It was a woman, you say?"

"Yes."

"And you do not know her name?"

"No. And now tell me who you are."

"I know who you are," came the startling declaration.

"How is it you know who I am?"

"Oh, I heard those men talk. They thought I was insensible, but I heard every word they said. You did not expect an insane woman here. You agreed to pay them five hundred dollars to bring me here, and after they had stolen me from my home they thought they could make more money, so they did not fulfill their agreement as at first arranged, but took me to another house. They stuck you, however, and then brought me here."

A more surprised man than Alvarez never listened to a statement. He just gazed aghast, and listened with tingling ears.

"You overheard them talk?"

"Yes."

"Then there must be a mistake."

"I do not think they made a mistake."

"Will you tell me who you are?"

"No; but I know who you are, and those men know more than you think."

The girl, while talking, was reclining on the sofa, and she was still enveloped in the shawls that had been thrown around her at the time she was first taken from her home.

"I tell you, young lady, there has been some mistake."

"No; there has been no mistake, and I tell you those men know more than you think."

If Alvarez had been talking with one risen from the dead, he could not have been more perplexed.

CHAPTER XXXII.

As stated at the close of our preceding chapter, the man Alvarez was perplexed; indeed, it was the perplexity of his life. Here was this girl, a prisoner, but as cool as a veteran actor on the stage, using slang phrases and acting a part. Yes, acting a part—that was his conclusion, at least.

"What do you think of those two men?"

"They are villains; they stole me from my home."

"You think they are villains?"

"I know they are. I know them, and I know you."

"Well, who am I?"

"Oh, it's time enough to tell who you are later on."

"Will you tell me what those men said?"

"I'll tell you one thing they said."

"Do."

"They said, 'He is a duffer. We will play him for all he is worth.'"

"They said I was a duffer, and they would play me for all I was worth?"

"Yes."

"Girl, this is all very amazing to me; there has been a mistake made."

"How?"

"You are not the party who was to have been brought to me."

"Then there was a party to have been brought to you?"

"Yes, an insane girl."

"Don't I talk like an insane girl?"

"You appear to recite facts."

"Certainly I do. Why, doctor, those men are on to your whole scheme."

"What is my scheme?"

"Oh, I heard what they said."

"What did they say?"

"They said you were seeking to steal a fortune—rob an heiress. They said there was big money in it, and that they were going to have their rake in. Yes; they said you had committed one murder; that they had you there, and that you were in to commit a second murder, and then they would have you dead to rights."

A more amazed man than the doctor never listened to strange and startling revelations. His eyes fairly bulged with wonder and amazement.

"Who are you?" he again demanded.

"Oh, you know who I am. They said you

murdered my brother, and that you intended to murder me."

"I never saw you before in all my life."

"They said you had murdered George Heath, that you were trying to hang Edward Kalley, and that you would murder me."

"Will you tell me who you claim to be?"

"I am Adele Heath; and I warn you to beware."

"I will know who you are," said the doctor; and as he spoke he leaped forward, evidently intending to seize hold of the girl, but he received a blow from some mysterious instrument. He fell over, and before he could regain his feet, the girl had disappeared.

The man arose to his feet just as Essie Hinsdale entered the room.

"Where is she?" demanded the woman.

The man for a moment was dazed, but finally he answered:

"She has gone."

"You let her go?"

"She fled."

"What has come over you?"

"Essie, I don't know; it's the mystery of my life."

"What do you mean?"

"They did not deliver the girl Adele to me."

"Whom did they deliver?"

"I do not know. I am all at sea. I must have time to gather my thoughts."

The man stood awhile thinking, and at length he said:

"These men have turned against me; they have the real Adele; they delivered a disguised counterfeit to me."

"What will you do?"

"I will do something."

"You must act at once."

"I will."

The doctor left the house. He proceeded direct to the house where the man Alger had made terms with him, and said:

"If you men do not fulfill your contract with me, I warn you it will cost you both your lives."

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean."

"I do not."

"This will not do. You know very well you delivered a counterfeit girl to me."

"We did not."

"I tell you that you are dealing with a desperate man. Alger, I have you in a grip of iron. If you do not set matters right, I will use my advantage."

"We did deliver the gal we took from that house, and if anything is wrong, the job was put up there at the house. I thought the gal acted strangely; but we were obeying orders. We got what we were sent for, and delivered what we got."

A new idea entered the doctor's mind.

"But why did you tell the girl my purpose?"

"We told her nothing."

"And what did she tell you?"

"She told us nothing."

"And what do you know?"

"We know nothing."

The doctor thought the matter over. He recalled many strange incidents. He thought over probabilities and improbabilities, and finally he was forced to a certain conclusion, and he muttered:

"Great Scott! I see it all now."

As our readers have discerned, the wonderful Eddie had played a great scheme. He had made up as a girl, and allowed himself to be kidnapped, or, rather, abducted. He had terrified the doctor, and at the proper moment had downed Alvarez and had escaped; and in all this he had an object. He was seeking to deceive and bewilder the arch-conspirator, and he had succeeded.

On the morning following the incidents we have narrated, Eddie held a conversation with Old Phenomenal. The latter asked:

"Well, Ed, what were you up to last night?"

"I worked up a little scheme."

"Will you tell me all about it?"

"You are so impatient."

"I'll wring your neck, lad."

The detective spoke with a smile, and the active and agile Eddie squared in a pugilistic attitude, and said:

"Come on, uncle! come on!"

"Will you tell me, boy, what you have been up to?"

"I've been bewildering the doctor."

"Not a bad scheme."

"The doctor had put up a job to capture the girl Adele."

"Well?"

"He captured her."

"Come, come; tell your story."

The boy told his tale. The detective listened, and finally said:

"You took big chances."

"Oh, yes! But I am here."

"Yes, you are here, but you might have been somewhere else. And I do not see that the game was worth the play."

"We now have this man dead to rights.

You have the girl. You have the proof of his villainy. Indeed, you have all you need. Why not close in?"

"We have not got George Heath yet."

"He is dead."

"I think you're wrong."

"You will see how far wrong I am in the end."

"We can close in at any time."

"That's so; and that part of it you can take care of."

"I think so. But you must have given the doctor a great surprise."

"You bet I did!"

"What must be his theory?"

"He has concluded that the two men sold him out."

"Could you recognize the men when you see them?"

"I've got 'em both down fine."

"Ed, there is one thing we must do."

"Well?"

"We must find the man George Heath."

"Then you want me to shadow in a cemetery, eh?"

"No; that man lives, and you have picked up almost everything else. You must secure a clew for me that will lead to his discovery."

"You stick to the idea that he lives?"

"I am sure he lives."

"Does the woman know about him?"

"I think she does."

"I can play her."

"If you do, without too great risk, you will learn something."

"I will start out late this afternoon. I wish to arrange my plans for the woman."

"All right; but remember and keep your eyes peeled."

"I always do, uncle."

While the above talk was in progress, the doctor and Detective Baily were holding a conference.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"BAILY, there is a deep and well-laid scheme to work out a terrible conspiracy."

Alvarez related many facts, or, rather assumed facts, according to his own coloring, and concluded with the statement:

"As I said, it is one of the deepest and most ingeniously laid plans ever concocted to cheat an orphan out of her rights."

"And you are sure the murdered girl was Essie Hinsdale?"

"I am."

"Where is the girl Adele Heath?"

"She is under my charge!"

"If the living girl is under your care, I can not see how they can steal the fortune."

"I have stated to you their plot. And now let me tell you, the real conspirator has employed a really adroit man to work in his interests."

"So it would appear."

"And this man has in his employ a lad or an imp—at any rate, a young rogue who is a perfect devil. He is a little fiend."

The detective assented.

"Catch that boy, and you will learn a great deal."

"As the boy appears to be in some way connected with the murder or suicide, I propose to run him down."

"And then communicate with me?"

"Yes."

"I will await your summons. I know you will succeed. And when this case is all settled there is no reason why I shall not, in the way of a substantial reward, pay the obligation I will be placed under by you."

"We will wait until the obligation is incurred before we talk about remuneration."

Alvarez then left the detective, and later met the young man Alfred, and said:

"I have run down the whole business."

"Well, what is it?"

"The girl has gone. They must have in some way got knowledge of our plan."

"Well?"

"That rag-picker girl—"

"Yes?"

"I think she was in it."

The doctor had reached the conclusion some time previously.

"If the rag-picker girl was in it, some one must have run you down."

"That is what I believe. Anyhow, the girl has gone."

"How do you know?"

"I've been in the house. I've been in her room. She has fled away."

"You bungled the case."

"I did the best I could."

"No doubt; but we will wait and see; you lay round and watch; report to me to-night."

When Baily left the man Alvarez, he started to walk away, when a man approached him—a bright, smart-looking man. The stranger walked straight up to the detective, and said:

"Your name is Baily. You are the man I wish to have a talk with."

"What do you desire to talk about?"

"A very important matter."

"Start in; I am listening."

"I do not desire to stand here on the public street."

"What would you propose?"

"That we go somewhere and sit down and take it easy."

The two men proceeded to a little out-of-the-way place—a drinking-place—and a moment later were seated over two glasses of ginger-ale.

"Well, sir, now start in."

"Who was that man you were talking with just before I accosted you?"

"What interest have you in him?"

"Is his name Alvarez?"

"That is his name."

"What was his business with you?"

"Excuse me, but you are a little cheeky."

"I am about to talk business with you."

"Before I answer your question I must know the nature of the business you wish to talk over with me."

"I wish to talk about the dead girl whose body was found at the —— Hotel."

Baily could not restrain a start of surprise.

"Who are you?"

"I will say I am a doctor."

"What else have you to say?"

"I would like to know what the man had to say with whom you were just talking."

"Do you know of his connection with the matter?"

"Not to speak of. What does the man claim? Does he say it was a murder?"

"Yes."

"What do you say?"

"I have thought it possible it may have been a suicide."

"Suppose I were to tell you it was neither?"

"I should say you were mistaken."

"You are not a doctor?"

"No; I am only a detective."

"You only made a superficial examination of the body?"

"I made a very careful examination."

"You do not claim to have knowledge that a physician might possess?"

"No."

"The woman entered the hotel alive at about nine o'clock in the evening?"

"So it has been established."

"Her body was found the following morning?"

"Yes."

"You saw it at what hour?"

"At about ten o'clock."

"Then if she had been murdered, or had committed suicide immediately after her entrance into the room, at the time you saw her she could not possibly have been dead more than thirteen hours?"

"What are you getting at, my friend?"

"The chances are she did not commit suicide, nor was she murdered immediately after her entrance into the room."

"The chances are you are correct."

"What would be your theory if I were to tell you that at the time you saw the body the woman had been dead at least two days?"

The detective stared, but did not answer.

"That would change all your theories, I reckon."

"It would, certainly."

"And shake your confidence in the story of the man who was just talking to you?"

"What nonsense is this you are giving me?"

"And now, suppose I should prove that Essie Hinsdale is alive and well to-day?"

"Then who was the woman whose dead body was found?"

"Oh, that is an after matter. I now tell you that Essie Hinsdale is alive, and that the woman whose body you saw at the —— Hotel had been dead at least two days when you first saw her remains."

"What reason have I to believe that what you say is true?"

"You can prove it."

"How?"

"You will see this doctor again?"

"Yes."

"He will allude to his story again?"

"Yes."

"Lead him on, and when a chance offers, ask him how he accounts for the fact that the woman had been dead at least thirty hours before she could have possibly committed suicide, or have been murdered. When you give him this, watch him."

"Suppose I am convinced that what you say is true?"

"I should think everything would be plain then."

"How, plain?"

"What nonsense! The man told you a story. If you prove one part of it false, the whole goes as no good."

"There is something in that," was the detective's answer.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE two men held some further talk, and finally Baily said:

"You appear to know a great deal about this affair."

"A little."

"What part are you playing in the game?"

"You had better take what you get, and go no further."

"Where did you get your knowledge? You must let me know who you are."

"Ah, no. You had better not quarrel with me. I've given you some good points. You've been on the wrong scent all the time. See the laurels you will win when you uncover this thing, clear up the mystery. You can have all the credit. Do not quarrel with the man who put you on to the real facts."

"I am not satisfied yet that I am on to the real facts."

"You are."

"I may not be."

"Then no harm is done."

"But I will know. You made the attempt to deceive me."

"That will not harm you."

"But I am after the real facts."

"Good enough."

"I know a great deal, my friend."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; I am satisfied you are giving me a false steer."

"What object would I have?"

"It might be a part of your game."

"You're off. Better investigate before you do anything rash."

"You claim to have put me on the right track?"

"Yes."

"Then there is no reason why I should not know to whom I am indebted for the information."

"It is the information you need."

"You know something about the murder."

"Well?"

"I am justified in arresting you."

"Go slow."

"I know my duty."

"So much the better for you; policy is your game now."

"I think you are deep in this matter."

"Possibly I am."

"It may prove that your information is false, and I must be prepared."

"For what?"

"I must know who the man is who tried to give me a false steer."

"Well, get to work."

"What do you mean now?"

"I mean that if you find out any more than I choose to tell you, it will be a force game."

"A force game it will be unless you open up."

"I defy you!"

Baily suddenly drew a pistol. He pointed it at the stranger, and said:

"Throw up your hands!"

The stranger did throw up his hands, and he

threw them forward, and they landed on Baily's face, and the latter went over out of his chair, as though kicked by a mule. The blow was struck quickly and deftly. As the man fell the stranger leaped from his seat and was upon him, and quick as lightning he disarmed his man, and leaning over, whispered in his ear:

"Take things cool, or I will make a show of you. I will see you after you have proved my information. Don't act foolishly now. It's all right. I am your friend. I am making for you fame and fortune. When I do uncover you will be glad. Good-day. I'll spare you, but mark well my words!"

The stranger, whom our readers have already recognized as Old Phenomenal, left the place.

When Tom Baily arose to his feet he was quite crestfallen, and he muttered:

"It's strange how I get it all round. I begin to think I am young; but my eyes are wide open now. I believe that man did put me on the right track. I'll test his information; and one thing is certain—I've been in company with the mystery, but no one shall know it. This little adventure shall be the secret of my life; and now I am on to a new trail. Essie Hinsdale lives, eh? I've never shadowed this doctor. I'll do it now; and by all that's strange, I believe I'll prove that man's words true!"

Our hero determined to lay on his ears awhile and let matters work. He met his little man Eddie, and to the latter he said:

"Ed, I am going to put you on a new lay."

"All right; I am getting a little rusty."

"How?"

"Well, I've been laid off."

"For a few hours, eh? Well, it does not take you long to rust."

"That's because I'm so bright."

Again the detective smiled, and said:

"I've had an interview with Baily."

"There is a perfect understanding between you at last?"

"Hardly."

The detective related all that had occurred.

"Poor Tom!" ejaculated Eddie. "If he plays against us he will learn something."

"Yes, he will. But now, do you see what I am up to, my lad?"

"You want me to watch Baily?"

"Yes."

"You think he will go for the doctor?"

"Yes."

"I'll be with 'em."

"Don't get caught."

"Not if the court knows itself; and it does."

"I do not want any unpleasantness with Baily."

"I see."

Eddie ran away, and he appeared to move like a bound on a sure scent. Within an hour he had run down Tom Baily, and he soon fell to the fact that Baily was on the lookout for some one; and when the detective went to the hotel where he had held several interviews with Alvarez, Eddie was at his heels.

Baily lay around for some time, and at length Alvarez appeared.

"I got your message," said the doctor, "and I am here. I did not expect you would send for me so soon."

"You were to put me on the track of the murderer?"

"Yes; and I have."

"You are sure the girl was murdered?"

"I am."

"And she was a lady named Essie Hinsdale?"

"Yes."

"And you can establish her identity?"

"I can."

"So far so good. And now, one more question: It was on the —— when the murder was committed?"

"On the night of the ——; yes."

"Then, when the body was discovered the victim must have been dead about twelve hours?"

"Yes."

The doctor became very uneasy, and Tom Baily was watching him. In this line Baily was good.

Then followed a moment's silence, and then the doctor asked:

"Why do you ask these questions?"

"They will have an important bearing upon the case."

"How?"

"As I told you, I have been making some very close investigations."

"Certainly."

"The evidence points to suicide."

"No; the woman was murdered."

"You appear to be confident as to all the facts."

"Yes."

"You are sure the girl was murdered on the night of the ——?"

"I am, most certainly."

"It's strange."

"What is strange?"

"A certain suggestion of a medical examiner."

The doctor's face assumed a ghastly hue, and Tom Baily's eyes were upon him.

"What is the suggestion?"

"One that will have a very important bearing upon the case."

"In what way?"

"As to the length of time the woman must have been dead?"

"Well?"

"You saw the body?"

"I did."

"You are competent to give an opinion?"

"I am."

"It's strange."

"Will you explain?"

The doctor's face was ghastly, and the detective was already half convinced of the truth of the information he had received.

"It is suggested that the woman, when found, had been dead two days."

CHAPTER XXXV.

OLD PHENOMENAL was fully confirmed; the doctor's trepidation was pronounced and decided. He was so excited that for a moment he could not speak, and Tom Baily took in all the symptoms. At length the doctor managed to ejaculate:

"From whom does it come?"

"A physician whom I employed to decide the matter."

"Who put the idea into your head to make this examination?"

"Oh, we detectives go into everything; it is necessary; but the suggestion appears to disturb you very much."

"It is so absurd."

"Why are you so anxious to establish a murder?"

"Because it was a murder."

"As I read it, all you need do is establish the fact of the death of Essie Hinsdale."

"I suppose, at least, that is fully established?"

"Well, no."

Again the doctor started.

"What do you mean now?" he demanded.

"You told me this Essie Hinsdale was a woman about thirty."

The last shot was an original suggestion with Baily, and it proved a good one.

"Well?"

"The dead woman could not have been more than one-and-twenty."

Alvarez was terribly confused; but he said:

"I must have been beside myself."

"How old was this woman Essie Hinsdale?"

"I should think about twenty."

"And how old was Adele Heath?"

"I should say about twenty-seven."

The doctor had good reason for saying about twenty-seven; but the affair was taking an unlooked-for course, as far as he was concerned or had anticipated.

"Then it would appear that the identity of the dead woman was not established."

"Then you doubt my word?"

"It is my business to doubt everything I hear, unless the statements can be well authenticated. Now, you told me Essie Hinsdale was about thirty. You claim the dead body was that of Essie Hinsdale, and yet I have proof that it was the body of a girl not over one and twenty, as I told you. Again, you say the girl had been dead about twelve hours. There is a doctor—an expert—who will swear that at the time the body was found the girl had been dead at least two days."

"And what do you make out of all this?"

"That some one has made a grievous mistake, or there has been an attempt to make things appear as they are not."

Again there followed an interval of silence, broken by the detective, who said:

"If it can be proved that Essie Hinsdale is really dead, you may be all right; but suppose the other side comes into court, and claims that Essie Hinsdale is not dead?"

"I expect them to do that; it will be a part of their scheme."

"Well, the court will go into the whole business. A motive one way or the other must be

established. I tell you that the case will hang upon the identification of the body."

"But the body of the dead woman is past the possibility of identification."

"No. Good photographs were taken. They have been shown to people who claim to have known Essie Hinsdale."

"By whom?"

"By me."

"Why did you show them?"

"It is my duty to learn the absolute truth. I can not consider you or any one else. I am trailing down the murder, if it was one, and I must and will learn the exact truth."

"You may go too far."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you may go so far in the wrong direction that you will miss the truth."

"I will take care of that. But I thought it best to talk with you."

"What will you do now?"

"Await your movements."

"My movements? What am I to do?"

"Show me the girl Adele Heath."

A few moments after the interview described, the two men separated, and a more uncomfortable man than Alvarez did not walk the streets of New York.

He walked away thinking and muttering, and Baily also indulged a little thinking and muttering; and he did more, as will be related as our narrative progresses.

He was still muttering when he was joined by Mattie.

"Well, Tom, old man, I see you had a little talk with the doctor."

"I did; a very important talk."

"And what did you make out?"

"I've been thinking during the last few days. It struck me we were running on the wrong scent. It struck me that it would be a good idea to work up this man, the doctor, a bit."

"That is the conclusion I've reached, and I've been working him."

"What have you struck?"

"The dead woman."

"Well?"

"We've been working on the idea that she was one Essie Hinsdale."

"Yes."

"It struck me that there was a possibility that certain clews we had picked up were, after all, well-arranged misleaders. If those little clews were purposely arranged as misleaders, there is something a little awry all round."

"Now you are coming around."

"Ever since I first looked upon that dead girl a shadowy possibility has been running through my mind."

"Well, was there anything about the appearance of the dead woman that struck you as peculiar?"

"Yes. I never believed she was murdered."

"What do you believe?"

"That it was a case of suicide."

"When did the woman commit suicide?"

"Some time during the night, of course."

"The night preceding the morning when we first looked upon her dead face?"

"It struck me that the dead girl looked as though she had been dead longer than twelve hours."

"By all that's strange, Tom, I had that idea! It's been running through my mind."

"It has through mine; and, putting all the facts together, I thought I would investigate in that direction."

"Well, what have you struck?"

"I'll tell you. I saw this man Alvarez. I came at him cautiously. I asked him a great many questions, and worked round to the one prod, and I asked:

"Are you sure the dead girl was Essie Hinsdale?"

"He said he was. I got him well committed, and then I fired out:

"I've an idea that you are mistaken. I've an idea that the identity is not established. I've an idea that Essie Hinsdale is still living."

"How did he take it?"

"Well, he acted and looked like a man who had suddenly been confronted with the ghost of his dead mother-in-law."

"Well?"

"I said to him, 'Doctor, suppose it should be proved that the dead girl had been dead two days?'"

"Great Scott! and what did he say?"

"I thought he would faint away in his tracks."

"We will shadow for the woman Essie Hinsdale."

"Now we are on the right track."

"I think we are."

"And what is your idea?"

"We'll go slow and await revelations. One thing is certain—there is a big game going on."

"How about the man who is playing so prominent a part?"

"It may be a double game."

"I see. And what will we do?"

"We will run down the middle and defeat both sides."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

It was about nine o'clock in the evening when Eddie met Al Stetson.

"Well, lad, they haven't corralled you yet?"

"No; I'm still on deck."

"Did you pick up anything?"

"I fell to Baily."

"Yes?"

"He was laying for some one."

"The doctor?"

"Yes; and I was at hand."

"Well, it's working right now. We will bother the doctor a bit."

Our hero gave Eddie some directions, and asked:

"Can you work it?"

"I can."

"All right; get on to your work."

Most men have a hanging-out place. Gentle men at their clubs; some men—a few men—are main home; others lay around, according to their several fancies. Baily and Mattie were hotel ghosts, and, as a rule, they were generally within hail of each other. Eddie went to their feeding-ground, and he was not compelled to wait very long before one of them showed up; and our little hero showed up also. He had a little plan in his mind.

Later, Baily showed up also, and suddenly Mattie said to his pard:

"Look there!"

"It's the boy."

"It is."

"We've got him."

"Good enough. I'll go and cover."

"A good scheme."

Baily took his chance and got away. Eddie had one eye open, and fell to the drop out; and he muttered:

"They are up to a game. Good enough! I am ready."

It did not take Baily long to work his transform, and it was very complete. It might have deceived even Eddie under ordinary conditions.

Baily lay around, but finally approached the wonderful boy.

"Halloo, lad! Are you engaged?"

"What do you take me for? A song-and-dance man?"

"No; but if your time is your own, I'd like to employ you."

"My time is my own."

"Can you carry a note for me?"

"Where to?"

"A lady."

"Why don't you ring for a messenger-boy?"

"That's a fair question. I'll tell you: I want a bright, smart fellow who can act in a confidential capacity."

"Then I'm your man; but I want big pay."

"You shall have it."

"Where must I take the note?"

"To a lady."

"What is the lady's name?"

"Well, you are very impudent."

"Am I? Good enough—I am! Is the lady Essie Hinsdale?"

If Tom Baily had been struck with a brick, he could not have had a greater set-back.

"Who are you, anyhow, my lad?"

"Oh, you know me, and I know you."

"Who am I?"

"You're Tom Baily, the detective."

Again Tom was taken all aback.

"What makes you think I am Tom Baily, the detective?"

"Oh, it's all right. I saw you when you went to get under cover. I'm up to all these little transforms, I am. But, say, is it Essie Hinsdale to whom you want to send the note?"

"Do you know a lady named Essie Hinsdale?"

"Do I? You bet! Why, Tom, you think she's dead, but she ain't dead. That was a fly away you got, that the dead woman who was

found at the —— Hotel was Essie Hinsdale. You got that as a misleader. But she's not dead."

The detective was amazed, but all he could

do was run right along with the wonderful lad he was talking to at that moment.

"Where did you get all this information?"

"Oh, I'm a mind-reader."

"You must be, lad."

"I am. Do you want to send a message to the lady?"

"I must have time to think. But, I say, boy, you know Essie Hinsdale—do you know the real name of the lady whose body was found at the —— Hotel?"

"I may and I may not."

"Whom do you guess it may be?"

"Well, it may be the body of Adele Heath."

"Who put up the game that made it appear that the dead woman was Essie Hinsdale?"

"You should run that fact down yourself."

"I'll run it down through you."

"Not this evening. But do you want to send a note to Essie Hinsdale?"

"I don't know the lady."

"Why don't you make her acquaintance?"

"I'd like to, my lad."

"I'll put you on to the house where she lives."

"I'll take you at your promise."

"With your permission, I'll give you some advice."

"That's all right; and will you first answer me a few questions?"

"I may."

"You met me here to-night by design?"

"I did."

"Who is behind you?"

"If I were to tell you, I do not think you would be any wiser."

"Try me."

"You met the doctor?"

"Alvarez?"

"No; the doctor who gave you a few points which have been confirmed."

"Is he an enemy of Alvarez?"

"Not more than you are. He wants the guilty found and punished."

"The dead woman—what of her?"

"I can't aid you there. I think Alvarez knows more about her than any one else; and if you want to learn all he knows, you'll have to run him down and work out the information."

"Possibly you can give me a tip how to do that?"

"Visit the woman Essie Hinsdale, and when you meet her—this Essie Hinsdale—address her as Adele Heath."

"Why should I do that?"

"You will be a great detective some day, but it will take you a great while; you don't catch on quick enough."

"Explain your point."

"Knowing that she is Essie Hinsdale, and knowing that she is passing herself for Adele Heath, you will be getting on to something, I reckon."

"Boy, this is a most remarkable suggestion."

"Certainly it is. The whole affair is a remarkable one."

"And now, what are you really trying to get at? Talk plain."

"I've told you my friend wanted to aid you in this affair."

"Yes."

"I am now showing you where you can get a clear proof of fraud."

"It is possible."

"A dead body was found."

"Yes."

"Some one gives you a few tips. The tips all lead to the conclusion that the identity of the dead woman is well established as Essie Hinsdale."

"Yes."

"And that this same Essie is passing herself off for some one else."

"You can show me where to find this woman?"

"Yes."

"I will put you on to the residence of this woman."

"Yes."

"You get into the house, come upon her suddenly, and ask her who she is."

"That can be done."

"And then you will know just how to work."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE wonderful lad had laid out a pretty comprehensive scheme; the detective grasped the whole idea, and he said:

"You and I will work together awhile, I reckon."

"We will investigate that woman's house to-night."

"That's my idea."

"And when will we start?"

"About midnight."

Eddie went away, and a few moments later Mattie joined his party.

"You had a long chat with the lad?"

"I did, and he's a dandy. That boy beats any one I ever met; and, Mattie, wonders, it appears, will never cease; but I think I am at the bottom of one mystery."

"Well?"

"You remember the old man who was in the room at the time we were looking at the body?"

"I do."

"That man is the mystery, and the lad is working in with him."

"Has he been against us?"

"Well, a little; but now he's ready to join hands."

"I'll stake my reputation."

"We haven't much reputation of late. We've been getting it in the eye."

"We have; but we'll come out all right yet. The lad was perfectly open and square. We've been dumped several times, but I've not altogether lost my cunning. I know that this time we are all right."

Tom Baily repeated to Mattie all that had occurred, and Mattie said:

"It looks as though it was all right."

"It is."

Eddie met Al Stetson, and repeated to the great detective all that had occurred. The lad had followed his instructions to the letter, and Old Phenomenal said:

"You have done well, and I think it will be you who will find the missing George Heath."

"I will be able to tell after to-night what the chances are."

At midnight the lad was on hand. Baily awaited him.

The two left the hotel, and proceeded toward the house where the woman Essie Hinsdale lived.

"Say, boy," remarked Baily, "I am on to you. I've got it down fine, so you may as well own up."

"If you've got it down fine, why do you ask me to own up? You have lots to learn, Baily. When you travel with me a bit, you'll know something more."

"You gave it to me good once."

"Well, you learned something then, didn't you?"

"I did."

"Have you outlined a plan now?"

"I have."

"Let's hear it."

Tom Baily opened up his plan. Eddie listened, and when the game was explained, he merely said:

"That will do."

Eddie pointed out the house to Tom. He did more; he showed him the little game he had for gaining admission, and he posted him considerably concerning the woman he was to meet.

There was a light in the woman's room, and Eddie said:

"It is possible the doctor is there."

The latter conclusion, as it proved, was the correct one. The doctor had visited the woman immediately after his interview with Tom Baily. He had entered her presence with a gloomy look upon his face, and the woman had said:

"You are down in spirits?"

"I am for once. I admit I am gloomy."

"What has turned against you?"

"The mystery. He is close upon us. He is giving me much trouble, and if he were only removed I'd be all right; but he has commenced a flank movement. He has not been here?"

"No; I've seen nothing of him. I'm ready for him."

"Eh, what's that?"

"If he comes here, he will trouble you no more."

The two held some further conversation, and Alvarez departed, saying he would return ere midnight, and he hoped to have a plan arranged by that time to strike a decisive blow.

As recorded, Eddie showed Baily how to enter the house.

Eddie entered also, and was about to steal up the stairs, when suddenly a hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Halloo, Mattie, is it you?" said Eddie.

"So you know me?"

"Yes, I do. See here, Mattie, this little game is closing; there are no close secrets in this business between Baily and myself; you had better let me go in."

The two entered the house by the basement.

Eddie, as our readers know, had a way of entering the house. He held an "open sesame" to be used at will. The moment they were inside Mattie suddenly fell over, and quick as thought Eddie gagged and bound his man, then dragged him to a rear part of the hall and left.

We will here say our little hero had not underrated Tom Baily. The latter was well fitted for the job he had in hand. He left Eddie and ascended the stairs. He had the lay of the house. He was well up in the business he had in hand. He arrived opposite the door of the room, and he knocked.

"Come in," came the summons from the inside. Baily knew he would be taken for another. He entered the room; the woman Essie stood before him.

"Ah! so you have come to torment me again?"

"No."

"Then why are you here?"

"I am looking for a lady."

"What is her name?"

"Adele Heath."

"You need go no further. I am Adele Heath. What is your business?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"THEN you are the lady a number of wicked conspirators are trying to make their victim?"

The woman laughed in a satirical manner, and said:

"And you are the generous rescuer who will protect me against the conspirators?"

"I am, if your claim is true."

"What claim?"

"You claim to be Adele Heath."

"And in what way does all this concern you?"

"A tragedy occurred at the —— Hotel."

"Yew, and by whom?"

"It is claimed that the dead woman was one Essie Hinsdale."

"Well?"

"It is also claimed that this Essie Hinsdale was one of the conspirators against you."

"Well?"

"It is claimed, on the other hand, that the dead woman was Adele Heath."

"And what have I to do with all this?"

"You claim to be Adele Heath?"

"I do; but what has that to do with the case?"

"If I can prove that Adele Heath lives, the fact is established that the dead woman was not Adele Heath. So much is cleared. And then again, if I can prove that the dead girl was not Essie Hinsdale, as claimed, my quest begins. I must find out who the dead girl really was."

"You assume to be a detective?"

"Yes."

The woman again laughed in a satirical manner, and said:

"You have heard that the dead girl was Adele Heath?"

"I have."

"You have also heard that the dead girl was Essie Hinsdale?"

"I have."

"Which do you believe?"

"I believe the dead girl was neither Adele Heath nor Essie Hinsdale."

"If she was not Essie Hinsdale or Adele Heath, who was she when living?"

"That is what I am trying to find out."

"Let's come to a perfect understanding. How much are you to receive for aiding in this wicked conspiracy to rob me?"

"I am not engaged in a conspiracy to rob you."

"I will pay you double the amount you are to receive if you will give away the whole thing."

"You are laboring under a great misapprehension."

"You play your part well, but you may as well drop your mask and talk business."

"You asked me a moment ago whom I suspected the dead woman really to be?"

"Yes."

"She was not Adele Heath."

"We will agree on that."

"I know that Essie Hinsdale lives."

"And you know where to find her?"

"I have found her."

"Has she confessed to her identity?"

"No."

"You have proofs as to her identity?"

"I have."

"Will you explain them to me?"

"Why should I?"

"Because this woman Essie Hinsdale has once sought to personate me."

"We will talk plain. I came here on certain information."

"Well?"

"I came here prepared to find Essie Hinsdale."

"Is she here?"

"I think she is here."

"Where?"

"I think you are Essie Hinsdale."

"That is what I anticipated your answer would be," said the woman.

"You anticipated that would be my answer?"

"Yes; and you are a villain. Ah, at last I have you!"

Quick as lightning the woman's hand shot up from under the table, and the detective fell over, totally blinded.

The woman laughed in a hysterical manner as the detective fell over, and drawing a long poniard, she ran round to where he lay. The dagger was unsheathed, and an instant later it would have descended, and poor Tom Baily's career would have closed then and there; but the little wonder was at hand.

The lad, as the weapon was raised, pushed the woman violently over. She fell upon her side, and so powerful had been the push, she rolled over. Eddie seized a pitcher of water standing on the table and dashed it in Tom Baily's face, and aided the officer to rise to his feet, and tendered him a towel which he found at hand. He had just time to do as described, when the woman rose to her feet with a scream. She sprung forward. The lad then grasped her more tightly, and threw her upon a sofa, and in less time than it takes to tell it he clapped a pair of handcuffs on her wrists, and she sat there helpless, the knife lying at her feet.

"You are a splendid specimen of an heiress. You are indeed the gentle Adele Heath," the youth said, in a sardonic manner.

Meantime, Tom Baily had managed to clear the fine black dust from his eyes. He was cool as he looked around and said:

"Well, young man, you did arrive just in time."

The boy drew close to the detective, and said:

"Now is the time to run down the curtain."

"What do you mean?"

"Leave her just as she is. We will go."

Eddie and the detective left the room, and as they descended the stairs, Tom said:

"I do not know, after all, as this is the right thing. I may force that woman now to tell something."

"You will not get a word out of her. We have worked it well. We will get our information from the doctor."

"All right. I will let you act as captain."

They reached the basement floor, and Eddie said:

"Come this way."

He led Tom Baily to where the great, strong Mattie lay bound and gagged.

"Great guns! What does this mean?"

"I had to do it. He was interfering," said Ed. It did not take Eddie long to release Mattie. The latter rose to her feet and made a spring at the boy, but Baily caught and held him, saying:

"Hold on, Mattie. What are you up to now?"

"I'll murder that little devil!"

"Wait, my man. Wait until we explain."

Explanations followed, and Mattie was appeased.

The three got out of the house, and walked away down the street, when Eddie said:

"Now, gentlemen, I must leave you. Go to your homes. Nothing more can be done to-night; to-morrow you will have a long talk with the boss, and then matters will be explained and our plans laid."

The two detectives would have talked further, but Eddie glided away.

Tom Baily then explained to his partner all that had occurred; and said:

"If I had succeeded in keeping that lad away, you would have been murdered."

"Yes; but one thing is plain to me now."

"Let's have it."

"There is a secret special on this case. He has let us run while working his game. He has used us, and we did not know we were being used. But we are in it!"

"What are we to do now?"

"Obey orders."

"Then let's go."

The two proceeded to their lodgings, while

Eddie had another scheme on hand. When he left the two men he merely doubled in his tracks and returned to the house where the scene was enacted that has been described.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

We will here explain a seeming mystery. Our readers may wonder at the facility with which our little hero entered the house where the woman lived. There were no servants in the house after ten o'clock at night. Knowing what might occur in her house at any time, and desiring the utmost secrecy, the woman only employed day-servants, and she took table-board away from her own house, consequently there was no cooking going on.

Eddie had reason to believe that the doctor would put in an appearance. He had overheard enough to know that he would most likely appear for a report. The lad, as it proved, calculated well, for the doctor entered the house in less than ten minutes following Eddie's second entrance. The lad followed close upon the man's heels up the stairs. He was on hand when Alvarez entered the room, and overheard his cry of astonishment when he doubted the woman sitting on the sofa like an upright dead body.

"Great mercy!" he cried; "what has happened?"

"Release me," said the woman.

"Who bound you?"

"The fiend who is on our track."

"Explain."

The woman told her story. The man listened, and said, finally:

"There has been a mistake here."

The man managed to free the woman, and said:

"Essie, we are in desperate straits."

"We are beaten. That man Kalley has been too much for us, after all."

"It is not Kalley."

"Who is it?"

"A combination. I have been deceived all round."

"So it would appear; and the question arises, what shall we do now?"

"I have a resource left—desperate remedy."

"It will take a desperate remedy to save us now. My rôle as Adele Heath is ended; we can not travel on that."

"There is no time for crying over our mistakes. I did all along what I thought was best. My scheme was all right; but who could ever have anticipated having such a man as this mysterious devil playing against us?"

"What will you do?"

"They have the girl. We have George Heath."

"That will not avail us."

Alvarez laughed, as he said:

"You can marry him."

"The man would never marry me."

"That can be brought about. That is one scheme; but I have another."

"Let me hear it."

"We can get the man and carry him away. We can hold him and force him to sign deeds conveying to me at least one half of his estate."

"That is the best scheme. But he will repudiate the transaction."

"Not after it is done my way."

"How will you carry out this last scheme?"

"We can remove the man to the country."

"You forget the men are on our track. They will find us."

"Not if we manage it as I propose. You will go in male attire; I will go in female attire. It will take them a long time to get on our track, if they ever do, until we are ready."

"Let's arrange our plans."

Eddie the wonder overheard every word that passed between the two conspirators, and his excitement was intense.

Alvarez left the house, and the woman commenced making her arrangements.

Alvarez went to one of the great hotels. Luck favored him. He found a carriage and he made terms with the coachman. He entered the carriage and it was driven away. Eddie had a good chase, but he kept the vehicle in sight, and was at hand when it came to a halt. Alvarez alighted and proceeded afoot. He soon arrived in front of a big building. The doctor entered. He was inside fully fifteen minutes. He then appeared accompanied by a man; both carried valises.

"Now is my time," muttered the boy. He stole along through the darkness like a Nemesis. The night was dark, wet and foggy. Ed-

die moved forward. He was to right on to the two men. Suddenly he leaped forward. Alvarez received one, two, three blows, and he fell insensible to the ground. The second man stood amazed and paralyzed—too amazed to utter an outcry. As Alvarez fell over, Eddie said, turning to the man:

"Your name is George Heath?"

The man addressed did not answer.

"That man was your enemy."

"Have you killed him?"

"No; I only knocked him over in order to enable you to escape."

"I do not understand you. I have no desire to escape. That man is my physician—my friend."

"Come with me. I will take you to a better friend, who will explain all to you."

"Who are you?"

"Your sister will tell you."

"But my sister is dead."

The man seemed undecided.

"Come with me. You need not enter any house until your sister comes forth to bid you enter. If I am not telling the truth, you can return to this man as your friend. If you doubt my word, you can have a policeman go with us."

"No—no. I begin to realize. I will go with you."

Eddie knew where his great friend the detective would be when he started, and a moment later he stood with his new friend in the presence of Old Phenomenal.

CHAPTER XL.

"I HAVE a gentleman here," said Eddie, in tones of great excitement.

"Who is the gentleman?" inquired Old Phenomenal.

"I will not let you guess; I will tell you: it is Mr. George Heath."

In rapid tones Eddie explained all that had occurred. The detective listened with rapt attention, and when the remarkable lad had concluded, he said:

"Ed, it's one of the greatest feats on record."

"I have promised the gentleman he should see his sister."

The whole party later entered the parlor, and George Heath asked his sister to explain to him all that seemed so strange.

The girl told her story, aided by the great detective, and in time George Heath understood the whole situation, and also all that had occurred. He then told his story.

"As you know, I went to California with this man. I did not improve in health, and one day he came to me with a telegram. The telegram announced the death of my sister. I did not stop to make inquiries. All I remember was a dizziness, and all was over."

"When I came to myself the doctor was at my side. He told me I had been insensible for over a month. He then proposed our return to New York. Upon our return to New York I was taken to a private hospital. I have been there ever since, and this man has been in attendance upon me all this time. I have been very weak. I had a man nurse with me day and night."

"What has been the nature of your illness?" asked the detective.

"Only weakness owing to the shock following the supposed death of my sister; but I now indulge a certain suspicion."

We will not weary our readers with further explanations. We have indicated the scheme of Alvarez as concerned George Heath up to the time he attempted to remove him. We will only add that the doctor had gone to the hospital that night; had stated immediate change of air was necessary for his patient, and that the circumstances were such they must make an immediate start. What followed our readers know.

The detective then went direct to the house of Kalley, and he said:

"You can go on the street; the jig is up—all up!"

"How?"

The detective told his wonderful tale.

"Can I go to my friend?"

"You can."

Later the detective saw Baily, and full explanations followed, and it was determined that Baily should see Alvarez, and, if he had not skipped, arrange terms of capitulation with him. Our hero's only motive was to avoid publicity and talk.

When the man Alvarez came to his senses he rose to his feet a little dazed, and stood for some time trying to determine just what had occurred. At length he reached a certain conclusion. He had seen no one, and he concluded that George Heath had made the attack upon him, and he muttered:

"Can it be possible this man has known my game all along, and has played me?"

The man, lost in deep thought, made his way to the house whence he had started out. He found the woman Essie Hinsdale prepared for the biera.

"You can unpack," he said. "The game is all over."

"What do you mean?"

The man told his story.

"Man, you have lost your head."

"No; it's all right. We've played and lost. That is all there is to it. We have nothing to fear."

It was well on toward midday, the servants were in the house, when there came a ring at the door-bell. The man asked to see the lady of the house, and sent up his card, on which was written the name "T. Baily."

Essie Hinsdale went to the room where the doctor had lain down with his clothes on. She awoke him, and showed him the card.

The doctor was perfectly cool as he descended the stairs and entered the room to meet Tom Baily.

"Well, sir, what explanation have you to offer?" asked Tom Baily.

"None. But what is your business?"

"I come to make some inquiries about the dead woman at the — Hotel."

"That woman committed suicide on the street. She was carried in a dying condition to — Hospital; there she died. I can furnish proof."

"How was it her body was found at the — Hotel?"

"That is something I can not explain. I reckon some one had a scheme." There was a twinkle in the doctor's eyes as he spoke. "They conveyed the body there, I suppose. I can and did identify her, and as the matter fitted to a little scheme I had, I let it go and took advantage of the incident."

"Can you prove your statement?"

"I can; by the people at the hospital."

The two men proceeded to the hospital, and the doctor did prove his statement. The other necessary explanations do not concern our narrative. The doctor did not attempt to deny anything. He knew his advantage as far as it went, and it was as he had indicated to Essie Hinsdale.

The matter of the death of the girl had been satisfactorily explained. The other matter was between George Heath and the man who had wronged him.

Baily made his reports to his chief. The district-attorney and the coroner were called in. Police officials do not invite trouble or labor when a matter is explained. They like to drop it as quietly as possible, and it was determined to give it out that the mystery had been fully opened up, and that it was a suicide. The party's identity remained unknown, and, as far as the public were concerned, that was all they ever learned.

Meantime, other matters were being looked after. The will of George Heath had never been offered for probate. The doctor's plans had not succeeded to the point where he dared take possession. He had fooled Adele, and then had worked his scheme.

Little more remains to be told. George Heath just stepped forward, took possession of his own, and the present he made to Eddie was enough to have enabled the lad to get married.

Old Phenomenal was well paid. After all, it had been his steady head-work that had prevented the success of a stupendous fraud. And Kalley—well, he received his reward, and Miss Adele, the sister of his friend, paid the score. The most natural of to be expected events followed. Adele gave her heart and hand to the disinterested youth who had first started in to checkmate a deliberate villain. As to the two conspirators, they were just defeated—that's all. Alvarez did not get his big slice for remaining quiet; his share went to the two detectives, Baily and Mattie. And we can not close our narrative in better form than to quote Mattie's estimate of Eddie.

"That boy," he said, "in trick and device, can give points to a Philadelphia lawyer."

THE END.

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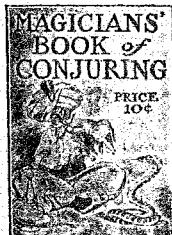
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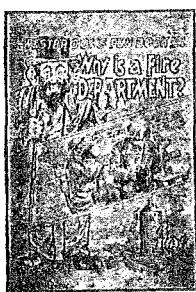


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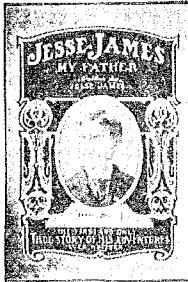
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